We Shall Live Again

George H. Hepworth

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WE SHALL LIVE AGAIN

THE THIRD SERIES OF
SERMONS WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN THE
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BY

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Author of "Herald Sermons," "Hiram Golf's Religion," etc.

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NOTE

I have received many letters asking that the sermons of the late Dr. George H. Hepworth, which have appeared in the Sunday edition of *The New York Herald*, should be published in book form. Through the kindness of Mr. James Gordon Bennett, I am permitted to offer to the public the present volume, the third in the series of "Herald Sermons."

MRS. GEORGE H. HEPWORTH.

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We Shall Live Again

WE SHALL LIVE AGAIN

And there shall be no night there.—Revelation xxii., 5.

THERE is not a whole household on the face of the earth! Not one in which there is no grief for the departed! The air is full of joyful greetings for those who have just come and of sad farewells for those who are just going.

We know by experience what awaits the newcomers into this short but beautiful life, but what have we to say of those who have whispered their "good night" and are about to fall asleep? Are we left in the dark concerning them, and must we weep until forgetfulness dries our tears, or can we look serenely into the future and think of them as

in some foreign clime, where they are rejoicing at their larger opportunities and awaiting our coming?

This is the great problem, and until it is solved to the soul's satisfaction we really have no God to worship, for a God who has made love the mightiest element of our natures, but breaks our relationship to others at death as a giant snaps a thread, is a being to be feared, but not one in whom to repose a cheerful confidence, and unless our religion has as much to say about the future as about the present, it neither fits our needs nor responds to our cravings. It is weakest where it should be strongest, and it suffers defeat when it should win the victory.

Unless you can tell me something about to-morrow I do not care to ask any questions about to-day. If the journey ends at sunset it makes very little difference to me where I wander or what happens to me. The time is too short for the accomplishment of any high purpose, for while I am engaged in my work and just as I get accustomed to myself and learn how to use myself to the best advantage I drop out of sight, leaving nothing behind except the memory of an unfinished task, and become a mere nothing in the midst of nowhere. My moral sense is destroyed,

and instead of that self-sacrifice for the good of others which is at once the most heroic and admirable quality of my nature, I eat and drink and am merry, because to-morrow I shall die.

How can I care for a God who cares so little for me that He makes me thirsty, leads me to the fountain, and then refuses to let me drink? I may be convinced of His power, but I am suspicious of His alleged wisdom and I stoutly deny His goodness. An earthly father who should act thus toward his family would neither receive nor deserve the affection of his children.

The denial of immortality, therefore, by those who are constituted as we are, and who are as dependent as we on that affection which develops all that is highest and noblest in our natures, is a preposterous libel against Him who taught us the Lord's Prayer. It chills every warm motive that leads to holiness, and so dwarfs the soul that it becomes hardly visible. No man can attain his full stature except under the influence of a faith which once in a while catches a glimpse of heaven, any more than a rosebush will blossom in the damp darkness of a cellar. Men and plants need light—

the plant the light of the sun, and man the light of immortality. But once convince a man that, as he has fallen asleep so often in this life that he looks forward to it after the hard day's work, sure that he will wake again at sunrise refreshed and ready for additional toil, so will he close his eyes at last only to open them in a brighter world, and you make a new creature of him. He is transformed and transfigured. The whole current of his thoughts is changed, his incentives lead him to a higher level of action ; he is no longer like the musician who plays out of tune, for he keys his instrument to the concert pitch which the Leader gives, and produces the best music of which he and his instrument are capable.

Our lives are based on thoughts, and the loftiest thoughts make the holiest lives. There is no conception which equals that of immortality in its benign, invigorating, and inspiring influence on the characteristics of a man. It consecrates all his energies and sanctifies all his affections. It brings him into harmony with the universe and gives him the right to call on God in time of need. He lives for eternity, makes plans which reach far beyond

the confines of our earthly life, bears with resignation the burdens which Providence places on his shoulders, and tearfully says "Good-by," with the glad certainty of saying "Good morning" later on.

But whither do they go who are summoned hence? Do the bonds by which they and we are united in life break at death? Does memory die when the body is worn out? Is memory a physical function, or does it belong to the soul, to live as long as the soul lives? Will they be so enraptured by the glories of the future that their interest in us will cease?

This cannot be true. Neither reason nor revelation gives utterance to such a preposterous statement. True love, the love that has grown sweeter and more tender with the passing years, the love on which two souls have leaned for support and comfort in the various vicissitudes of this lower world, is as much stronger than death as a giant is stronger than a child. The change from our life to another can produce no change in love, except, indeed, to make it purer than ever. Love will not, cannot die.

And they who go, go not so far but they can return. It is not a long journey from here to heaven.

In Jacob's time it was only a ladder's length, and it is the same now. Our loved ones are close to us, bringing help and good cheer. The angels ministered to Christ, and the law has not been repealed. They minister also to us, and when we die our opening eyes will see familiar faces, and in our weariness we shall find rest in the embrace of those who have gone before.

THE MAN WITHIN

Thy soul shall be required of thee.—St. Luke xii., 20.

IT is the man within the man who excites our wonder. He is there, but you cannot see him. He is not discovered by the scalpel of the surgeon, who lays bare every hiding-place in the body, but still he is there. I have loved my friend these many years, have walked by his side in summer and winter, have wept and laughed with him, but I shall never see him until he and I move out of our bodies, and spirit looks into the face of spirit.

This inner man may be closely related to the body, but the two are not identical. They are at once independent and interdependent. I have noticed that when the outer man is out of order the inner man is hampered in consequence, as, when the strings of a violin are not properly tuned, the player produces only discords. The player and the violin are dependent on each other, and neither can make music

without the other, but the player and the violin are not one and the same. When the man within the man is depressed or angered the blood of the body rushes to the face or retreats from the face. It is not necessary for the lips to tell me what is happening in the inner depths where feeling resides, for it is all seen in the countenance, just as the landscape is painted on the canvas by the artist. But the canvas and the artist are not one and the same. That mysterious something in the face which we call "expression" is simply an outward advertisement of internal emotion; it is the spirit shining through the body, as a light inside the lantern shines through the red glass, but the face which wears the expression and the soul which makes it are not one and the same.

This action of body and soul on each other has led some to the conclusion that they can never part company, but at death will suffer the same fate. I cannot see, however, why it is impossible for a man, who lives in a house until it is so old that it crumbles, to walk out of it when the time is ripe, and with all his belongings, and enter and occupy another house. He may love the home in which he has enjoyed and suffered, and it may, indeed, seem to be a part

of himself. His life under its roof is crowded with so many associations that he weeps at the thought of leaving it, and feels that he may never find another abode as congenial and convenient, but when the necessity arises he can step across the threshold and go where destiny leads.

Now this soul—what is it? I wonder if I shall be misunderstood if I say that it is a detached portion of Him whom I worship as God ; that for some cause it is at a long distance from Him ; and that through the struggles of life it is slowly making its way back, with the hope of finding itself at home with Him in heaven at last. God made me, therefore His thought, His power, and His love express themselves in my whole being. For reasons which are easily explained, I have separated myself from Him, but I literally belong to Him, and He as literally belongs to me. What I call my religion is nothing more than His revelation of the way in which I can approach Him more closely and maintain more intimate relations with Him, thus achieving my manifest destiny. There never comes a day in which I do not feel that He has the same attraction for me that the loadstone has for the bit of iron. In my

deepest nature there is an inexpressible and unsatisfied yearning to be at one with Him, and the remorse which is the consequence of my evil ways is only a kind of homesickness, a painful consciousness that I am not where I ought to be because I am not what I ought to be.

We began the journey of life at birth with eyes that were blinded by the iridescent novelties of an untried existence. We were filled with the dangerous sense of mastery. We were finite creatures, but we assumed the prerogatives of the infinite, and thought ourselves sufficient unto ourselves. We were gods, and God was banished. We found our chief pleasure in self-gratification, mistook our ignorance for wisdom, and, concluding that we needed no help from on high, wasted our inheritance of holiness and ended in a tangle of doubt and despair. The world will continue to go wrong until self-conceit gives place to self-distrust, and we confess that God can guide us better than we can guide ourselves.

I have seen a fire smothered with cold ashes, and I have seen a soul in the same condition. The possibilities of a blaze are in the furnace, and the possibilities of high aspiration are in the soul, but they

are choked. Rake away the ashes, put on fresh coal, open the draught, and you will look on a miracle. The flame will creep through the fuel, and after a little the genial heat will pervade the house. You have been cold and uncomfortable, but the blood soon tingles in your veins and your whole being throbs with new life.

Precisely so with the soul. It is choked for want of the presence of God. We have trusted earth, and the fire has well-nigh gone out. Life is dreary and the future is doubtful. Rake away the cold ashes of conceit, put your faith in the Eternal Love, seek His will and do it, then revelations will come to you, you will be happy, gentle, kindly, sunny—a child at heart and a giant to do your work.

The Christ was filled with God's presence. He knew nothing else. Therefore He made the blind to see and raised the dead to life. He walked in light even when it was dark, for the light was within. Omnipotence was never farther off than arm's length and was subject to His command. The Christ was our Brother, and by showing us what we may become when we have a like faith He is also our Saviour.

AN OPEN WINDOW

And he said, Open the window eastward.—2 Kings xiii., 17.

AFTER a beautiful summer day I was once sitting in the gloaming by the side of a friend whose earthly life had also reached its twilight, and for a while not a word was spoken.

There are times when speech seems to be a poor vehicle of thought. The landscape, with its purple hillocks on the horizon line, had a language of its own. The shrill chirp of the cricket, the clear note of joyous birds seeking their nests for the night, the rippling of a near-by stream hoping to soon lose itself in the river, the swaying of a field of wheat in the evening breeze, the soft music of the pines, like a harp touched by unseen hands, were so impressive that silence was a part of our worship.

At length he said: "The soul has its windows as well as our houses. If we would lift the curtains on

the heavenward side we should know better how to live and have less dread of death. We see too much of the present and too little of the future. To lean on the window sill and look out into the busy throng is a pleasure, for God has offered us many opportunities for work, but to lift the window on the other side and give the winds that blow from the far East free course through the house is a great comfort, a refreshment, a consolation. There are angels round about us, but we do not see that they are there. We need their kind offices, but the window is closed and they cannot enter."

Then once more we grew silent and the shadows deepened on the earth. The stars came out one by one, as though they were whispering "Amen" to what the old man had said, and when I reached my study I felt that the greatest of all privileges is to keep the windows of the soul open on the heavenward side. We are keenly alive to every word that this life utters, and if with the ears of the spirit we could also hear what the good God and His loving Christ are saying we should walk with lighter step and bear our burdens with more buoyant energy. It is the lack of a personal relation to the All-Father

which puts us out of harmony with our destiny and makes our duty hard to perform and our faith frigid.

No man can become a good musician unless the soul of music is in him. The cold ambition to attain perfection is nothing in comparison with that thirst for melody which insists on finding melody everywhere. It is not the strings of the instrument which make music, but the soul. When the heart is in the fingers, the tones which make the air vibrate bring tears to the eyes and suffuse the whole being with emotion.

In like manner real religion has its origin in the heart rather than the head. Intellect is magnificent, but heart is godlike. It has never occurred to us to declare that Jesus had a great mind, for we always think of Him as the lover of mankind. His thoughts were as wide as the firmament, indeed, and no secrets were hidden from Him, but somehow when we bend the knee to His divine excellence these thoughts all brush themselves aside, and we see only the glory of that earth-embracing love which pours over the ages from the sacrifice of Calvary. Philosophy profound as creation was His, but above it surge the infinite sympathy and charity

of His life, as the waves of the ocean dash over the jutting rocks on the coast.

It is not so much what a man thinks as what he feels that makes him great; not his intellectual conception of God, but his consciousness of God's presence. The poor woman's faith, abiding amid storm and wind, is more available than the scholar's treatise.

There is a godward side of life which seems to be clouded and dim. Great truths are there, the greatest of all truths, but we see them through a glass, darkly. The Christ saw them with clear vision, and therefore He is our spiritual ideal, and the wear and tear of the centuries have not frayed His glorious garments.

A blessed world lies all about us; a more blessed world looms up on the horizon line. In the light of the latter we walk and are happy. Heaven is close at hand, and through the open windows of the soul we can catch glimpses of it. Its dear ones are our dear ones, and their unseen hands are downstretched to lift us over the rough places. Give us an eye to see, and nothing will be too much to endure, for he who is going home can

bear the dangers of the journey with a light heart.

Religion teaches us that this is true, and therefore let us have religion sooner than wealth or fame or aught else that earth affords.

THE GATEWAY TO HEAVEN

A natural body and a spiritual body.—1 Corinthians xv., 44.

IF my religion can teach me to live without a regret it will also enable me to die without a fear.

That kind of religion covers the career of the soul from the moment of birth until it safely lands on another shore, where it will find something grander to believe and something better to do.

In these wonderful days of research science has crossed the line between body and spirit, and a new realm of investigation has been discovered. The genius of man has at last become introspective.

It has heretofore spent itself in boldly exploring the domain of physical law, and has thereby added to the comforts and conveniences of life. The universe has surrendered many a secret, and there are many more knocking at the door of the laboratory, coming within range of the telescope and microscope,

and whispering in the ears of those who know how to listen. Under the influence of our newly acquired knowledge disease has been largely checked, health has come within reach of all, the sea has become the pathway of commerce, distance and time have been annihilated, the four corners of the earth stretch out their hands to us morning and evening, every clime sends its offerings of fruit and food, and the music of the spheres is our lullaby as we fall asleep. It is a magical world in which we live.

But in these latter days we are investigating that mysterious something in man which is capable of making all these discoveries and inventions. What is the universe? We have partly answered that question. What is the soul? We are trying to find out with some degree of exactness, and with the hope of lifting our belief out of the fog of hypothesis and placing it on the strong ground of demonstration. We have for ages been cheered by the thought that soul and body, though they have the most intimate relations with each other, and in many respects are interdependent, are still so separate that the fate of the body does not involve the fate of the soul. In positive proof of this, great progress has been made,

with still greater promise for the future. Research on scientific principles is young, but it is vigorous and hopeful.

The time is not far distant when we shall be just as sure, not by faith only, but also by sight, of the other life as we are of this. Prediction veils its eyes as it looks into the radiant possibilities near at hand, and, trembling with sorrow, wears a smile as it bends to catch the last sigh of the departing. The curtain between the two worlds is being rent asunder, and in the revealing providence of God the turrets of the New Jerusalem, glistening in the morning glory of a wider knowledge, are almost visible through the mists which have enveloped them.

In faithful acceptance of the truth as revealed by the Lord Jesus we have looked through a glass darkly and borne our misfortunes with calm resignation and such a hope of reunion in the better land that the flow of our tears has been checked, but as the world moves in the path of progress toward the Infinite Centre it is not strange that we see more and see it with clearer eyes. Faith is stronger, as well as wider in its sweep. Christ is coming closer

to us. The New Testament is being read, not by candlelight, but by sunlight, and truths which were once vague and perplexing are pouring their comfort and consolation over our homes.

The day is near at hand when what we call death will no longer be feared, but welcomed. When the true religion of Christ takes its rightful place in our minds we shall bend our shoulders to the burdens of life like a traveller who is heedless of the painful steep he is climbing because he is on his way home, and we shall do our duty with the sturdy integrity of the student who knows that diligent application to his task will prepare him for a noble career. We are now glad to be alive, but when the next revelation comes in all its fulness we shall also be glad to die. The shock of death is nothing when we know that we must traverse the valley of shadows on our way to the summit beyond. It is our unbelief which gives birth to a brood of fears, but farewells have a bitterness in them because to-morrow is hidden behind a cloud. The grave seems ghastly and heaven is dim because Christ speaks to dull ears. But when the new science shall sweep the mists away it will show us the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration.

It will thrust aside our hampering traditions and crude theologies, and turn the pages of the Bible that we may read it afresh and learn for the first time what Jesus meant when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also."

The whole story is in the Book, and has always been there. Science will only corroborate the Master's words, and in doing so will tear the gloom away with which we have regarded both life and death. When those hours arrive we shall live in brotherhood, in charity, in love. The cruelties of our present social system and its many injustices will disappear, and the living gospel, the eternal Word, which has never yet been understood, will be heard with willing ears and grateful hearts.

And death will be shorn of its disguise as a terror and stand forth as the radiant messenger who comes when the day's work is done, lulls us to sleep, then wakes us to the bright morning of a new day. And in that waking we shall rejoice that the true love of earth outlasts all time and ripens into greater beauty in heaven.

IN ANOTHER WORLD

And there shall be no night there.—Revelation xxii., 5.

WE are told very little as to the exact conditions under which we shall find ourselves when we wake from the sleep of death. Perhaps it is best so, in spite of our longing to know more about the life which lies just beyond the horizon line, and to which every fleeting day brings us nearer.

If there were no other sentence except that uttered by Christ to the penitent culprit on the cross, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," we ought to be satisfied. It contains a clear statement of the fact of immortality, given under circumstances of peculiar impressiveness. It is as though a guide who was leading a poor disheartened pilgrim through that deepest darkness which just precedes the dawn should say, "Patience, poor soul, for yet a little while, and we shall see the sun on the hilltops."

The world has advanced toward a new conception of the duties and privileges which await us. The merely poetical theories of our fathers, in which unnatural and uncongenial employments were specially conspicuous, have given way to a larger and more rational view. We no longer dread the future because we shall be strangers there, but, on the contrary, look forward to it because we shall be more at home than it is possible to be here, with opportunities which we have hoped for in this life, but have never been able to attain.

The necessity for drudgery, which consumes so much of our time, the struggle to provide for our dear ones and ourselves will lapse with death, and we shall be free to follow the divine ambitions which have during our earthly career been an elusive dream. We shall deal with our souls unhampered by the needs of physical bodies, and can develop ourselves in whatever direction our bent may lie, with an environment which will encourage us to do and be our best.

It is a very rich truth that death takes from us what we can most easily part with,—a body which claims so much of our attention is oftentimes a

painful burden,—but it is powerless to rob us of mind and heart, which are the basis of all conceivable excellence.

The poor violinist who makes strange music out of a wretched instrument would deem it good fortune to be presented with a Cremona which would respond to the touch of his finger-tips and give forth the sounds which he has only heard in his dreams, but has never been able to produce. So, I take it, the soul may look forward with such high anticipation to the time when the noblest and purest and truest shall be placed within reach and can be had if he is willing to make the necessary effort.

One thing is certain, that death changes nothing except location and standpoint. Personality remains untouched. The grave covers no faculty of the soul. I myself shall never go into the tomb. Before my body is taken there I shall leave it, and it will go alone, its duty done, its mission ended. I love my body, and my parting will not be without a certain kind of sorrow, just as tender associations move me to tears when I move out of an old house in which I have lived for years. But I have joy also, for I leave a worn-out home for a new and better one.

If I retain my personality then I have all I can ask for. Invincible logic leads me on. My mind, my memory, my affections are part of my personality, and they remain undisturbed. I tenderly keep the past in view, and no future, however glorious, can obliterate my remembrance of it. I keep my love for those who have been left behind, my interest in their welfare, my desire to give them assistance. I am not changed one whit by the simple fact of death, only broadened in my sympathy, while my love becomes more intense than ever and more refined. My farewells were not farewells, for I shall be nearer to my dear ones than before, though we are separated by a mist through which they cannot see, while I shall be able to do so.

All this renders life very beautiful and very grand. A man's usefulness as well as his happiness depends almost wholly on his mental attitude. The difference between being a bit of driftwood — with no origin and no destination, the plaything of fate— and a stanch vessel, which lifts its anchor in one port, faces the storms and waves, and comes to anchor in another port—that expresses the difference between a soul with eyes fixed on nothingness

and a soul which walks with heaven in full sight.

The Christ touches the innermost spirit of humanity when He declares that "I go to prepare a place for you." We want nothing more, for our lives are rounded and complete. We can look through our tears and be glad that our dear ones have escaped further suffering and are at rest. We look forward to the hour when we also shall enjoy that rest amid surroundings which will purify our hearts and lead us ever onward toward increasing light.

GUARDIAN ANGELS

Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.—St. Luke xv., 7.

THIS is one of the many passages of Scripture which we have never fully apprehended. Indeed, I sometimes think that we go to the Bible to find statements which will corroborate a theory of our own instead of studying it for the purpose of drawing from it the system which it was given to reveal.

There is a great deal in the popular belief which I cannot find any warrant for in the language of Christ, and there is also a great deal in the Bible which I do not find in the popular belief. We believe more than is necessary in some directions, and not as much as is necessary in others.

If we could slough off what men have taught us as the truth and simply sit at the feet of the Master, as the multitudes did in Judea, we should discover,

perhaps to our surprise, that the essentials of religion are very few in number and that they can be as easily understood by the unlettered workingman as by the best scholar in the land.

My text, for example, contains two or three truths which have been most persistently ignored, and which are rarely spoken of by our religious teachers. And yet they are truths as beautiful as the sunshine and as needful in the spiritual life as dew is needful to flowers.

First, heaven and earth cannot be far apart if there is rejoicing in the one place over incidents which occur in the other. There may be a certain indefiniteness in the mind as to the locality of heaven, and it is more than probable that this indefiniteness is for a good reason, but if we are assured that it is in such near neighborhood that those who live there are interested in what is going on here we have a fact which is of the greatest importance, and one which changes the whole outlook of our lives.

The worst feature of bereavement is the feeling that the dear one has gone so far beyond our horizon line that communication is not to be thought of. It is that feeling which breaks the heart and prompts us to wear the deepest mourning.

If one of the family goes to Europe the sense of loss is very profound, and the separation is hard to bear, but behind it all is the thought that the child is not only alive, but that he is in a better environment than we could afford him in the home. We grieve, but mingled with the grief is something which makes us feel even proud of our ability to sacrifice ourselves for the child's good.

If, however, one dies and goes to heaven our attitude is very different. To the sense of separation is added the sense of loss. There is little or no appreciation of the fact that heaven is a great deal nearer than Europe. The thought of immeasurable distance is almost equivalent to annihilation. If we had a larger faith, such a faith as is visible throughout the New Testament, we should look on a grave without that consuming sorrow which we now entertain, and think of death as more of a gain than a loss. We mourn hopelessly because, while we believe a part of the Scripture, we also ignore a part. In other words, we filter Christianity through our prejudices before we accept it.

Now, nothing can be more evident, if the text contains a truth, than that there is angelic co-opera-

tion in human affairs. We are not alone in our work, our joys, or our sufferings, for the upper and the lower worlds overlap each other, and though we go not there they can come, and do come, here. Unless this is true you may as well close your Bible and "clasp it with a clasp," for it makes that statement as a component part of its revelations. Why we should fail to see this, or see it only with the physical eye and not with the spiritual, and so render the most glorious portion of the Book inoperative, cannot easily be accounted for. That we should deliberately blindfold ourselves when God tells us to look at these things is a piece of religious folly or bigotry which is close to religious suicide.

To be sure, it changes our conception of the other world, but why should it not be changed if we have hugged an untruth to our bosoms when the truth would make us happy and contented in our work and patiently resigned in our sorrows? If God tells us of this world and its duties, why should we accept His revelation and then reject His word when He tells us of the other world and the labors in which its citizens are engaged?

They rejoice when we turn from the evil of our

ways; then it follows as a logical necessity that they grieve when we persist in evil. If we go right they are glad; if we go wrong they are anxious. How can they take any interest whatever in us unless that interest has two sides, joy and sorrow?

In our imaginations heaven is the most unreal, most mysterious, and most contradictory place, so unlike God's world below that we can hardly think of the two as controlled and governed by the same being, and as a consequence we look forward with something like terror to the necessity of making the change. This is all wrong if the Bible is right. It is as natural to die as it is to go to sleep, and under normal conditions it would be as painless. We wake from slumber to do our day's work. We wake from death to do a better work than we have ever dreamed of.

Fear nothing for those who have gone, but rather look forward with high anticipation to a reunion. Simply do your duty while you live, and when the day ends you will be thankful for the morrow which awaits you. Work now, sleep at last, and afterward —heaven.

THE SOUL OF A MAN

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.—Psalm xlii., 1.

AS to what the soul is, of what elements it is composed, neither you nor I dare make any dogmatic assertion. Perhaps in some future age, when science shall have penetrated into the radiant centre of this problem, and the invisible becomes visible, men may be able to see each other's souls as they now see each other's bodies. The genius of research has wrought so many miracles that such a consummation would add but little to the astonishment we have already enjoyed. Psychology is a new domain, as yet practically unexplored, with many a surprise in store for us. It is easy, therefore, to imagine that at some future time science will be able to demonstrate the difference between matter and spirit, and prove beyond a

doubt that the latter does not cease to exist when the former is resolved into dust.

Whether the soul consists of some sublimated material substance, like the ether which fills interplanetary spaces, or is essentially different from anything we call matter, is a question which at present puzzles the thoughtful world. Investigation is making long strides, and it would be rash to limit its possibilities.

The Christ very evidently saw more than we can see, and when He called the spirit of Lazarus back to reinhabit his body He must have known where that spirit was and must have been in communication with it. The miracle-worker and the unseen Lazarus must have been within hearing distance of each other. What He saw we may some time see, and certainly shall see when we are in the same relation to God and the universe that He occupied.

I am satisfied at this moment with the fact that the real man is behind the eye that looks, behind the lips which speak, and that when the lips are dumb and the eyes are closed this real man will step out of the worn-out house which has served his earthly purpose and enter another house which shall better

fit his new environment. He will be the same man in another home, but with a larger prospect and a wider outlook. Whatever changes occur in his character and his motives will be the natural result of his clearer vision and his better knowledge of the relative value of the things to be desired, just as a man who travels from his narrow life in the village to the broad life of a great city drops his prejudices and his small views, and gradually becomes a part of the grander projects which tempt his energy and rouse his ambition.

The other world is simply another and more favorable opportunity. If a boy should be suddenly transferred from his home on the farm, with its slender routine of drudgery, to the competition of a large business circle, he would, by slow degrees, see everything in a different light. Many of his old opinions would drop like dead leaves in autumn, and fresh and larger ideas would take their places. He would be precisely the same creature, but he would be enlarged, ripened, developed. Just so with the soul after death. It will be the same soul that it was in the body, but it will be larger; it will expand, grow, and all the changes of outlook and inlook

which are induced will simply be the result of this growth.

As a man he does not lose sight of the old home or the dear ones far away when he achieves the successes of wealth. On the contrary, some of the sweetest memories are those which carry him back to earlier days, and there is always a tender spot in his heart for those he has left behind. Much more will this be true when he passes from time to eternity. Affection is not checked by death. It seems to me that it must be increased. With larger sight and clearer observation he will become, under God, a sort of providence over those for whom his soul yearns with unabated love, and in many ways which we know little about he will find happiness in being of service to them.

Thus are the two worlds in juxtaposition. They overlap each other. Eternity and time are so mingled that we cannot tell where the one ends and the other begins. God Himself is here, and under His wings we live and move. Christ is here in our very midst, ever turning our hopes upward and pouring into our poor lives the divine influence of His thoughts, even as the sun floods the earth and

warms it until it smiles with crops and flowers. The angels are also here, their unseen hands leading us, their good cheer chasing away our depression and filling us with a larger faith.

This is religion, good, solid, inexhaustible, and everlastingly true; the only religion which can light our way through the darkness of to-day into the beauty and glory of immortality.

RECOGNITION IN HEAVEN

And this mortal must put on immortality.—1 Corinthians xv., 53.

IT has been recently asserted, on authority which attracts some attention, that the desire for immortality is not as nearly universal as has been supposed. The statement is startling enough to assume the appearance of a misstatement.

It may be true that a certain number of units in the great aggregate are so constituted mentally that they find it impossible to believe in immortality, but they are conspicuous exceptions. Such persons are not to be envied, because this life can never reach the fruition that is its ideal without the ripening and mellowing influence which the belief in another life imparts.

A flower may perhaps blossom in the shade and become a thing of beauty, but it cannot be compared

with the neighboring flower which draws its perfume from sunshine and dew as well as from the soil. A perfectly wholesome soul needs the future as well as the present, and the former has as much to do with the conduct of its life as the latter.

And this immortality must jealously protect our personality, as the moat and drawbridge protect the castle. It is an insignificant fact that we are to live again unless we are to be as truly ourselves in the hereafter as we are here, or, better still, unless we are to be more truly and more largely ourselves there than here. The Oriental philosophy which bids the soul prepare to be absorbed in the infinite at death, as a mountain rill is absorbed by the ocean, thus losing its little self in the magnificence of the whole, rouses no spiritual response and furnishes but slender motives for right action. We may not be worth much, but what value we have resides in the fact that we are what we are, with indefinite opportunity for self-development.

The thought of Christ was that death is not annihilation in any sense or in any degree. To-morrow will be like to-day. The only change that can occur is the loss of the body, or, rather, the exchange of a

physical for a spiritual body, but not even death can alter those qualities which constitute our characters. Death has unquestioned power over muscles and nerves, but no power whatever over memory or affection. These are beyond his province, and he cannot encroach upon them. Either this is true or immortality is a figment of the imagination, a pleasing delusion, but not a truth. Memory undisturbed and affection unaltered not only render the farewells of those who go as impressive as they are hopeful, but they are the crowning benediction of God on those who remain.

Shall we, then, recognize the dear ones when we meet on the other shore? How can it be doubted? Is the faith of ages a mockery? Have we through the longings and the yearnings of centuries built up a theory which is to be suddenly extinguished as one blows out a candle and finds himself in the dark? Is the door of eternity, which has been revealed not by the Christ only, but by the irrepressible instincts of human nature, to be bolted against us as we approach it; and will the voice of a loving Father, who has asked us to trust Him, change its tone to harshness in the assurance that the hopes He

has implanted, which have cheered us as we pushed our way towards heaven, are a deceit and a falsehood? Of all impossibilities this reaches the most colossal proportions. There is nothing in the infinite length and breadth of the universe so incredible.

On the other side we shall meet again; and, meeting, we shall know each other. Mated souls will continue in another life the journey which was interrupted here. The mutual interest which makes you and your friend one here will know no change there. Undivided hearts will remain undivided, and under the benign influence of eternity they will come even closer together.

Vessels which left port in company may be separated and sail far apart during the storm; but they are bound for a common destination, and when they reach it they will be in company once more. The separation was only an incident, only for a time, and the coming together was accomplished by the compass with which every vessel was provided. Moreover, these vessels can communicate with each other by wireless telegraphy, and souls on earth can equally hold communion with souls in heaven.

Patience, resignation, faith,—these three. They make the present endurable, even cheerful, for the other shore is not far distant, and then we shall be with God, Christ, and those to whom we have said good-night!

A HAPPY RELEASE

But is passed from death unto life.—St. John v., 24.

A VERY dear friend of mine has just left this world behind him in his travels. He has gone beyond the reach of my vision. His fourscore years were spent in the sunshine of a consecrated life, and he constantly reminded me of a wheat-field whose grain had ripened and was ready for the reaper's sickle or scythe.

When I heard that he had fallen asleep and could not be wakened ; that the voice of a loved one had called him, but he had not answered, I knew that he was enjoying repose after a hard day's work. His earthly life had suddenly become a reminiscence. He had gone elsewhere, had solved the great problem, and was in the midst of scenes about which he had dreamed from his youth. He had discovered that the faith on which he builded was a surer

foundation than the bold headland which juts into the sea and which the storms of ages have not displaced.

When I heard of his departure I was shocked, because his absence would be a personal loss, but to my surprise my eyes were unwet with tears. He was glad that it was all over, and why should I not be also? I felt like congratulating the dear ones who were left, but their grief restrained me. And yet it was the right thing to do. The old idea of death, which has prevailed for so many generations that it has become a sad heirloom, put its finger on my lips, and I was dumb, but the larger confidence in immortality which of late has fallen upon the race like a refreshing shower prompted me to say that my friend had been wonderfully blessed by his transfer from the lower to the higher existence, from the beauties of earth to the glories of heaven.

I believe that one should be cheerful all through life, but especially so in advanced age. In our youth we have the world before us, but our capacities, our faculties, are all undeveloped. We neither know what we are nor what we can do. Hardship is our schoolmaster, and only through our mistakes

do we learn how to live. We put pleasure, excitement, perhaps passion, to the test, and find at last that the soul is still hungry and unsatisfied. When we reach middle life we become philosophers and logicians. We pass from the radiant realm of imagination into the domain of reality, and for the first time know how to live in order to make the most and the best of life. By that time our whole outlook and our whole inlook have changed. The inner man has matured, while the body suffers decadence. The one has learned wisdom. The other recognizes its doom. The soul has become stalwart, is armed and equipped for achievement, while the body suffers pain which points to dissolution.

These are the stern facts of the case. But they are not more stern than prophetic. If, therefore, we superadd to our philosophy and logic the faith which opens the door of immortality, then we become happier and more cheery and peaceful and contented as we approach the end. It is in the natural order of things that it should be so. And it will be so if we keep company with the Christ. If it is not so, then we are in an abnormal and unhealthy state of mind.

How suggestive it is that we are just ready to live nobly, and have just learned from our blunders how to do so, when the Strong Messenger knocks at our door with a writ of eviction in his hand! What is the meaning of it all? Simply this, if I read the Scriptures aright,—that we get our primary education here, and equip ourselves to make use of the larger opportunities which another life will afford. Death is an introduction to higher privileges and a wider field of labor.

In the forest one happy afternoon, just as the sinking sun colored the clouds with crimson glory, I came upon a ground-bird's nest. I stooped to examine the four little eggs which lay therein. It was a pretty sight, for nature in all its phases is beautiful and instructive. I soon found, however, that the eggs were empty. Perhaps some despoiler had been there, some robber reptile. But no. The mysterious life within those eggs had matured. The shell was no longer a fit residence for it; it had broken through its confinement, and had taken wing. Possibly the bird that perched on a fallen log near me had lived in that narrow home and was now chirping cheerily at its release. Happy bird! I thought.

Shall I be sorry that it is enjoying a forest life instead of an egg life? Is it a time to weep because the shell is empty? Shall I not rather be glad that another songster has been added to the great flock; and, though I am awestruck at the change which has taken place, a change so mysterious that I can never hope to understand its processes, can I look at the empty egg and then at the bird on the trunk of that old tree without breaking into song myself?

So I looked on the face of my friend, but did not see him there. He had gone. His body was an empty shell. But one more voice is added to the chorus of praise, one more soul has broken free from the trammels of time. I have one less to love on earth; one more to love in heaven.

Thus says the religion of Christ. It is cheerful, hopeful, and joyful. The day brightens as it departs. Sunset means sunrise. Our real loves are untouched by death. When we reach our other home we shall be glad that we have crossed the river, and shall wait for the coming of those who have lingered while we hastened.

THE MAN AND HIS FAITH

O death, where is thy sting.—1 Corinthians xv., 55.

DEATH is always impressive. It is one of the experiences through which we pass, either with the grim fortitude of an unyielding will, if our outlook into the future is cloudy or misty, or, if we have faith, then with the trembling assurance of one who traverses the dark with a lantern to guide his way.

There is an infinite difference in the mental attitude of one whose earthly day is spent, and who faces the impenetrable shadows of an eternal night, and one who knows that there is a to-morrow hidden behind to-day, and that the sun which gilds the west with pleasant memories will soon gild the east with the radiant beauty of a higher life.

The heart that clings to immortality has an element of strength which is otherwise unknown. I

have seen death many a time as it stole with slippered feet into a tearful household, and have watched the varying emotions with which the sufferers met the inevitable. I am free to confess that some who have said their last farewells, but have had no hope of a continued existence, have bravely stood the shock of fate and taken the step into the dark without a tremor of fear. In that supreme moment they have been even glad to be relieved of physical pain and to enter on the rest which is equivalent to oblivion. But I have also seen something as much grander than this as the grandeur of a symphony built by a master brain is greater than that of the cradle song with which the nurse sings the child to sleep. The eyes have seen what comes within range of mortal vision only in that hour when heaven discloses itself to those who are about to enter therein. At eventide there was light, and that light filled the last moments with the crimsoned beauty of a sunset cloud. Farewells were mellowed by the certainty of a reunion which would come in good time, and the tired traveller whispered of hand-clasps in a better land. The couch of the sufferer seemed surrounded by "invisible beings

who walk the earth both when we wake and when we sleep," and religious faith, ripening into resignation, parted the lips to say, as Mr. McKinley said, "It is God's will; His way is best." Then I have talked in serious strain to my own soul, and have declared that this simple trust, which can make us buoyant when the tears of our loved ones are falling like a sudden shower, is the most practical thing known to man, and is worth more than all else that earth can offer.

So to live that to die is gain, and to be conscious that it is a gain; to be glad of the exchange of an earthly for a spiritual body, and to fall asleep in the certainty of waking in a higher and a nobler life, is to grasp the consummation so devoutly to be wished, and to reach the ideal which God places within reach of honesty, truth, and fidelity.

The President—the mortal part of him—lies in the shadow of death. We mourn him because he was the friend of the Republic, because his public policy was based on the best welfare of the people as he understood it. We revere his memory because in both his private and his official life he was the sturdy defender of the right, a man with a conscience. It

is no flattery to say in this hour of our national bereavement that a sense of personal loss increases our sorrow, but as we think of him on this Sunday morning it is not in connection with the office he filled so much as in connection with the courageous manliness of the man. Simple-minded, quiet in heart, he was at first hopeful of recovery, and did his part to stay the progress of his malady, but when he saw that it had been otherwise decreed he looked through the window at the green trees and the blue sky, whispering, "How beautiful!" Then, with the peaceful acceptance of his doom, bade us all goodbye, and, with "Thy will be done," fell asleep.

We shall cherish the memory of our dead—his life an incentive to the youth of his country, his record unblemished by regrets. He has passed beyond the reach of time, and his last hours were made radiant by a faith in God and a certainty of the immortality which awaits us all. Such an example, such a deathbed, speak to us with an eloquence which cannot be resisted.

That kind of religion leads one in the footsteps of the Master, both when He entered Gethsemane and when He ascended to Heaven.

THE SOUL WITH A BODY

Whilst we are at home in the body.—2 Corinthians v., 6.

HOW odd and yet how natural it is that we should always have put the body before the soul in our endeavor to make the present life comfortable and satisfactory!

There is a visible man, and there is, as one of the barbaric tribes of Africa has it, "the man who looks out of your eyes." The first monopolizes our attention; the second receives only a passing thought. We are under a persistent illusion that the first is real while the second is more or less mythical, whereas the exact opposite is the truth.

To this visible man we devote all our ingenuity. We see that he is well fed, clothed, and housed. We devote ourselves to making him happy. We surround him with all the luxuries and conveniences which can be invented. We have stolen power from

the clouds, fuel from the depths of the earth, and laid the fields and forests under tribute for his enjoyment. We have done so much for him that I am not far from right in declaring this to be an age of miracles. Indeed, he has absorbed so large a part of our time and thought that we have neglected the welfare of the man who looks out of our eyes, ignored his necessities, and left him to care for himself as best he can.

We even go so far as to believe that we shall be happy if we can satisfy the demands of the physical and sensuous. To this end we constantly struggle, and most of us die before our purpose is attained. We say to ourselves that we shall be supremely happy when we have earned the fortune which will purchase the longed-for environment—a house, equipage, pictures, and the thousand other things which we think are to be coveted. Then when we change our dream into reality and possess the power to gratify every wish we meet with a surprise and a disappointment. We are not satisfied as we expected to be. We have toiled for what seemed to be a substance, but it turns out to be a shadow. Happiness is not found in what the merely physical man can enjoy.

The only true man is the one who looks out of our eyes; the one of whom we have taken so little account; the one whose highest aspirations we have sacrificed in order to acquire a lesser, an inferior satisfaction.

We shall never know happiness until we recognize this fact, throw aside our false philosophy, and pursue a nobler policy. Religion has been warning us all along that we must attend to the wants of this second man, but so forceful has been our unbelief that we have regarded religion as something to die by, but not to live by, a very disagreeable and distasteful something which forbids the pleasures in which we take delight and enjoins duties which are peculiarly irksome. All this is the result of false thinking. We are possessed by convictions which, like an ignis fatuus, lead us astray.

We have heretofore believed, and acted on the belief, that we are a body with a soul in it, but the truth is that we are a soul with a body for an overcoat. To devote ourselves to the overcoat and neglect the soul would seem to be a piece of irrational folly, and yet that is what we have been doing and what we are doing now. The worship of the

overcoat—that is our religion. And the hardest task we ever perform is to get far enough away from the overcoat to recognize the fact that we have a soul. We are hypnotized by the body. It has made us its servants, its slaves, and in some cases our slavery is of the most abject kind.

The man who looks out of our eyes is our real self. He is imprisoned for a time in the body, and we look so carefully after the prison that we almost forget that there is a prisoner. But the hour will arrive when the prison will crumble, and then the emancipated prisoner will go free.

What is on the outside of a man may add somewhat to his happiness, but it cannot produce it. It may increase the number of his opportunities to acquire a blessing by giving a blessing, but unless what is inside is satisfied life must needs be a failure. I can make a stronger statement and still be within the limits of exact truth : if the man who looks out of your eyes is contented you have very little more to ask of kind Heaven, though perchance your larder may be well-nigh empty, but if that man is not contented he cannot be made so by a dozen gold-mines and by all that they are able to purchase.

We are living body-lives, not soul-lives. Our time is spent not so much on a sensual as on a sensuous plane. Thoughts, beliefs, aspirations, are not regarded as a fortune to be worked for or dreamed of as a "consummation devoutly to be wished." They have no value which excites covetousness. On the contrary, we regard the possessor of these treasures as peculiar, eccentric, possibly unbalanced. But stocks and bonds and houses,—these are the real coin, and in order to acquire them we make all sacrifices, run the risk of breaking down in middle life, and rob the soul of its honor and self-respect.

I do not scorn the body, but I worship the man who looks out of your eyes. Guard both with vigilance, but especially the latter. The real man is the immortal man, who will some day move out of his body. Him I ought to cherish, educate, develop. He must be nourished by noble thoughts and unselfish aims. He is really all I am. With everything else I shall some time part company, but with him never, and when death comes to demand of him the surrender of the body—that is, his overcoat—he will then begin a broader and a grander life, in comparison with which this is only the primary school of his childhood.

PARTINGS

And all that generation were gathered unto their fathers. —Judges ii., 10.

THE gates of heaven can never be closed, for every instant of time some released and glad soul, from some part of the earth's surface, crosses the golden threshold and finds rest. The air is filled with our good-byes and the welcome of angels, and if we hear the one but not the other it is because our faith is weak and our ears are dull. We are apt to forget when some dear heart leaves us that if there is sorrow in our homes there is great rejoicing in the upper zone.

After the weariness and pain of a long illness, heaven is what a safe anchorage is to a storm-tossed vessel. The vessel heaves a sigh of relief that its struggle is over and it can rest quietly on the bosom of the calm waters which are so land-locked that it

has nothing to fear. It has done brave battle with wind and sea, has perhaps been taxed to the utmost to hold its course, but the rattling of the anchor-chain means that the victory has been won and that sunshine and blue skies are to be the reward of its brave efforts. So the soul, hampered and handicapped by some insolent and aggressive disease, becomes resigned to separation from the body, and finds in another world the peace and freedom which were denied in this. It hesitates, possibly, as it approaches the end, because it is a strange experience through which it is about to pass, but when the crisis is over, and it soars to realms unknown in company of those whom the Father has sent to see it safely on its way, it is like the traveller who suddenly emerges from a multitude of dangers and hardships and finds himself in the embrace of old friends.

That we should mourn is both natural and proper. That we should robe ourselves in heavy black, as though the sun and God Himself had been blotted out, is, from the standpoint of a cheerful faith, little short of a crime. Death, if we think aright, is a release from the burdens which we have borne for

years, and entrance into a realm of larger opportunity. Many a man has come to his best self only after he has left the churchyard behind him. If our religion is worth anything it shows itself in the temper in which we face separation. We may think of ourselves, of our personal loss, in which case selfishness is the chief characteristic of our grief; or we may think of the departed and beneath our tears cherish the glad belief that he has found at last the rest which his earthly life refused to give. The true view of the situation is that which our Christianity furnishes—sorrow which cannot be repressed, with rejoicing that there is another life, and that he is in a better home than earth can afford.

It seems to me that a religion which keeps us company until we reach the edge of the grave, and then abruptly leaves us, has little practical value. I would as lief never have met it as to be compelled to part with it in that supreme moment. To shrug its shoulders when we ask about the future, and have nothing to say, shows plainly enough that it is not the kind of religion the soul craves. The Christ, at such a time, shines like Orion on a winter night. He grows grander of stature and calmer of spirit as

He approaches Calvary. But He is grandest at the last, and when we go to the tomb to pay our last tribute He is not there. He mastered death, and if we wish to see Him we must look up, not down. We must needs listen when such a preacher preaches.

We have lost dear ones and wonder where they have gone. Our eyes are dim with tears, but despair changes to hope as the air vibrates with the words, "Let not your heart be troubled." Our hearts are not only troubled, but broken, if death is death; but when He tells us that death is life, that earth is the threshold of heaven, our whole outlook is changed. There is good cheer everywhere, for the end of this life is only the beginning of a better life. We step up when we approach the grave.

And they who have gone may be nearer to us and more helpful than when we and they were under the same roof. Unseen presences are in every household. To realize this is to have a clear sky above us. One lives above the clouds when he has this faith. Think of the other world as home, therefore, —of this world as a simple bivouac,—and the whole aspect of things will be brightened. They have gone, but we shall go too in good time, and when

we meet again, as we certainly shall, we can put our hands on our hearts and say: Life has been beautiful, death has done us a service, and heaven is our permanent abiding-place.

THE SOUL'S GREATNESS

And the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.—Genesis ii., 7.

WHAT a startling statement! And the longer you think of it the more it startles you.

Man, then, is a twofold being—dust and God! In good time the dust will go back to the place whence it was taken, to be used again as a component part of tree or flower or animal. We need it only for a few years, and when it has served our purpose we sigh farewell, for its companionship has been very pleasant, and so our knowledge of it ends.

But the "living soul," what of that? It does not return to Him whose breath it was, but preserves its identity, is indestructible, and, as a personal being, enters another sphere of activity, there to be developed by circumstances more favorable than any which earth can afford.

The dust can accomplish its entire mission here, and why, therefore, should it continue to be a part of us? But the soul never wakes up to a perfect knowledge of itself until it is roused from the sleep of death. Then only does it thrill with the consciousness of real life. Its bondage to the flesh is broken, it becomes free, it loses the sense of limitation, it recognizes its dignity as a part of the plan of God, it feels within itself the throbbing of this breath of the Creator, it appreciates its kinship to Him, and it trembles with boundless joy at the thought that it is immortal.

How curious that a man who lived several thousand years ago, and who represented a semi-barbarous people, should have uttered such words as these! Where did he get the truth he spoke? Yes, they are the truth as we in this modern age understand it. All our systems of religion are based on it, and when we meditate of the grandeur of the soul and its endless destiny the words of the text repeat themselves in our ears. They are crudely and rudely symbolical, and yet they have rung through the ages like a chime of bells. We do not accept the seer's story of man's creation as literally

true, but we are amazed that he should have so emphasized the difference between body and soul at a time when the world was in its swaddling-clothes.

We retain his idea, but clothe it in more philosophic language. We declare that God's life pervades the universe; that all life comes from Him and is a part of Him. Man's soul is, therefore, the God in man. Since no part of God can die, the soul must needs live forever. The Infinite and the finite belong to each other, just as the water in a pool came from the water in the ocean. The mother's love is simply God's love fitted to the limitations of a home, and all the attributes of man are God's attributes in miniature, the one being the shadow of the other, or, better still, the echo of the other. You cannot get away from God, and when you try to do so your conscience pricks you and bitter remorse is your portion. Remorse is merely the homesickness of the soul, the soul remembering that it has wandered and longing to get back.

What a marvellous idea of human life follows from these facts! You have perhaps wasted it under the honest impression that it matters little what becomes of it, or that, at any rate, it is your

own and you have a right to do with it what suits your fancy. But no; your life is in a large sense the property of God, and you are His appointed steward to guard, care for, and develop it. It will never return to God as two flames, the little and the large, combine, the little being lost in the large, for God has given you your life, just as a king would give a peasant some treasure, never asking for it again.

And that life of yours, that mysterious, wonderful life, a puzzle which no science has yet truly guessed —what use have you made of it, what are you doing with it now, and what shape will it take in the days to come? Has it been depressed by leaden doubts and fears, has it been frittered away in follies or in pleasures which have lasted no longer than a brilliant soap-bubble which bursts when its colors are most radiant? Or have you moulded it into some heroic form, using your circumstances as the sculptor uses his tools to bring the statue out of the rough block of marble?

God has done one thing which seems to me so awfully grand that the brain reels while contemplating it: He has given you sole charge of your own

character. You are master, and events are your slaves. He puts sweet and persuading influences about you, He sends the whole unseen world to direct you with invisible hands, but when you face your experience you alone must decide whether it shall lift you to the stars or sink you into the mire. Such responsibility! How God must have prized the soul He created when He made it the arbiter of its own fate!

And if He has given it such grandeur and crowned it with immortality, can we do aught else than lead princely lives, as Jesus did, conscious that we are so large that we should disdain all smallness, and throbbing with that divine ambition which will be satisfied with nothing less than the highest good and the noblest attainment?

That is the religion of Christ, and it consists of an appreciation of what you are, and of your destiny, and a determination, with help from above, to produce such a character out of the discords and smiles of time that He will say at last, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

THE BEYOND

Who brought life and immortality to light.—2 Timothy i., 10.

I HAD a serious conversation the other day with a scientific man, a surgeon, and he made one statement which is so remarkable that I would like to speak of it at some length.

He had, of course, seen many men in their last earthly moments, and he declared that what he called philosophy, which includes a doubt or denial of continued existence, would enable one to die as comfortably and serenely as religion. At least that was his experience and observation.

Now it seems to me that this statement contradicts the whole logic of the universe. If it is true, then I have all my life misunderstood my own human nature and that of everybody I know.

I can easily believe that under certain circumstances a man may welcome an eternal sleep as

preferable to the life which has furnished him with nothing but disappointment, failure, and suffering. Such a man, however, is in an abnormal state of mind, and is not a fair representative of his fellows. I can also conceive of one who is utterly reckless and who lacks a full appreciation of the value of the soul, meeting death with a grim kind of courage, without any hope of waking up after he falls asleep. He also would be an exception to the general rule.

But that the average man, living an average life, is willing to surrender himself to utter obliteration, and does it cheerfully and without a pang, is to me quite beyond credibility. I am not myself made in any such mould, and there is no reason to suppose that I am in this respect different from others. That the thought of annihilation can exert a soothing influence on a dying bed looks like a contradiction of terms, and that the religion which fills us with hope is no better than the so-called philosophy which denies all hope is so wholly unthinkable that I open my eyes in wonder when the assertion is made.

It will be easily granted, even by atheism, that if there were another life the certainty of it would give

us good cheer in the hour of our departure. I am sure, therefore, that a man who has faith in immortality, other things being equal, can meet his fate more calmly, can say farewell less regretfully, than he who says good-night with the feeling that the night is to last forever.

The last thought is copper, the first is golden; and if it be true that men are just as satisfied with copper as with gold, then I have read the world all wrong.

Stand by a grave. Life is only a prologue and has ended. The love which you have given has snapped like an overstrained rope. No hope, nothing but darkness. Is it well with you, my brother? Are you resigned? Can you be of good cheer? The last note of life's music has been heard, and the soul that uttered it has died with the body. That is one picture.

Listen once more. Love never dies. The dear one is in a better land and awaits your coming. Hearts need not break at separation, because the hope of reunion is ever present. Heaven is close at hand, and there will be other handclasps in other climes. Now it is indeed well with you, and there

is no bitterness in your tears. This picture is better than the other, and it is the true picture.

Some of us are getting well along toward the autumn of life. The first frosts have already come, and there are flakes of snow in the air, presaging the approach of winter. We have lost some of our heart's best treasures, and their memory is still green. Our love for them grows warmer and kindlier as the swift days, like the flight of birds, go by. We face the inevitable and ask ourselves what it has in store for us. We must be very thoughtless if we have not done this a thousand times and received some sort of answer.

If philosophy teaches me to doubt, and religion teaches me to believe, I don't know what kind of human nature it is which finds as much comfort in the one as in the other; and I have yet to find the man who would n't be happier and better if he had more of Christ's spirit in his life and heart. The true philosophy and the true religion, yes, and the true science, also, are all one in their aim, which is to enlarge the scope of usefulness and comfort, and by and by the three will stand side by side, co-operative giants, lifting us all up to the higher level.

I have perfect faith that a man can feel his way to the throne of God, and equal faith that he can think his way there.

Until that consummation is reached, my observation shows me, and my experience with my own soul proves it, that an estrangement from God cannot produce as grand results as a secure confidence in Him. If I am sure that I am travelling along an upward road, and that as my outward eye grows dim my inward eye will see the Home which is my ultimate destination, a Home in which I shall once more see my old friends, I can think of death with a smile, and even hold out my hands to him in welcome.

But if the end is the end,—if they are all gone for ever, and I am going the same way,—I face events in a different state of mind, and wonder sadly why I have lived at all.

The brightest, holiest, and most inspiring thing under the sun is a belief that we shall wake up after sleep. It gives us courage, broadens our shoulders, and makes us rich in anticipation. The other life is better than this, and when there we shall complete the work which we left unfinished as the shadows fell on our short and troubled earthly career.

THE OTHER LIFE

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked ; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.—Acts xvii., 32.

SINCE those old days the number of those who mock has steadily decreased. We have heard again of this matter, and have attained to something like a certainty concerning the continuance of life after the incident of death. The time for argument has passed, and, while all regard immortality as a possibility and many look upon it as a glorious and alluring probability, the great majority have a faith which cannot be shaken.

The world presents to the careful observer a curious and interesting paradox. First, it is true that we are wonderfully absorbed in purely material things. We have discovered so many forces which our fathers knew nothing about, and have so eagerly set ourselves to the task of making them contribute

to our convenience and comfort, that at first sight it seems as though we had abandoned all thought of the future and were making ourselves content with the present, to the exclusion of what will happen when we fall asleep.

But, second, this very enjoyment of to-day is a hint of to-morow. If we can do so much now, if we have developed capacities which grow by what they feed on and which hint at no limitation, a silent and subtle logic tells us that extinction in the midst or on the very threshold of achievement is an unthinkable anomaly. The orchestra must not lay down their instruments in the middle of a symphony; the thinker must not cease to think when he has barely learned how to do it, and the builder must not leave his work when he has laid the foundations of the house, but should certainly go on until the structure is completed.

It seems to me, therefore, that the trend of the age is in the direction of a larger, a wider, and a firmer belief in immortality. The more we know of this world the more we feel the need of another. We have not done with God when we have done with our earthly life. A quiet conviction has stolen

into the universal consciousness that there are other rooms in the Father's mansion which we shall some time occupy, and that they who have gone are simply a day's march ahead of us in the soul's journey.

This thought is so prevalent that we can feel its presence everywhere. It has changed our mental attitude toward sorrow and bereavement. The desolate churchyard of other days, with its moss-covered stones and its atmosphere of loneliness and hopelessness, has no place in the spiritual economy of these days. A brighter outlook has forced us to change all that. Our cemeteries are no longer neglected, but their broad acres are covered with flowers, as with a sad kind of good cheer.

This change in the outward is proof of a change in the inward. The heart of man is not as the heart of our fathers, and the faith of man is deeper. The other world is no longer a dream, but a mist-covered reality. In time to come the mists will roll away, because the sun will grow brighter, and the future will be as clear to us as the present. Possibility has given way to probability, and probability is slowly surrendering to demonstration.

A light fills the eyes, a joy fills the heart, and separation is no longer the equivalent of despair. God has spoken often, but we are just now learning to hear what He has been saying ever since death first brought its shadows into the household. Religion has a larger element of rejoicing in it. We have heretofore stood at the door of the tomb and tearfully wondered who had taken the body of Christ away, but now we have heard angel-voices say, "He is risen as He said!" and our graves have become resting-places, a mere bivouac on the road to heaven.

During the last half-century the whole complexion of human experience has been altered. The fear of an arbitrary judge has given way to love of a just, a merciful, a sympathetic, and loving Father. For the first time we take a positive pleasure, unalloyed by timidity, in repeating the Lord's Prayer. When we gaze through our tears at the sky we feel as though we were looking into the windows of our future home. When we bear the ills of life God's goodness drives away the old thought of His wrath, and patience and resignation bring a smile to weary lips. When the stars come out at night they seem

to be lights in the "house not made with hands," and the dear ones who have gone are there awaiting our coming and the glad reunion which will follow.

All this is the result of a better understanding of the Christ. His words have a new meaning, and when we read them in the broad light of our new day we breathe pure ozone, and are not only refreshed but purified in thought and feeling, and made to rejoice with a joy unspeakable. Religion is sunshine, is strength, peace, food, drink, sleep. It is a mother's arms enfolding her child. It is the helmsman at the wheel; it is the pole star which directs our course from shore to shore; it is the skilful guide when we toil to reach the mountain's summit.

When the day is done we hear the angels sing, "He is risen!" and after the sleep of death we follow the echo of their voices until the gates are reached and heaven changes from a dream to a reality.

EASTER MORNING

He is not here : for He is risen, as He said.—St. Matthew xxviii., 6.

THERE has never been another morning like that! In all the history of human experience it stands alone, conspicuous and awful in its mystery. A startled world looked into the empty tomb, and, while looking, wonder changed to hope, and hope became certainty. From that time to this the sky has been brighter, the clouds have been radiant with reflected sunshine, and the heart of man has been cheered by visions of a glorious future.

The most difficult thing in this lower life is to appreciate thoroughly the fact of a higher life, and to act with constant reference to it. We are so saturated with the spirit of to-day, so entangled in the fascinating meshes of the present, so content with the pleasures and ambitions of time that the future seems more like a romance than a reality. In

a vague sort of way we believe in a continued existence, but we are so concerned about the apparent impossibilities connected with it that our faith is more or less blurred and marred. We allow ourselves to dwell so continuously on the method by which immortality is to be achieved that we sometimes doubt God's ability to keep His promise, and feel that He should have told us more about it. So we walk in a dense fog, once in a while catching a glimpse of the landscape when the fog lifts, and then again groping about, not knowing which way to turn.

The action of Christ under circumstances more trying than any we can experience is a rebuke to us. He faced life with less calmness than He faced death. He grew in spiritual stature after entering Gethsemane. He was never more serene than when the shadow of the cross fell on Him. He was like a star at all other times, but when the nails were being driven into the cruel wood He was a blazing sun. One cry of human suffering escaped Him, but it was the cry of the body, not of the soul. I marvel at this. The picture attracts and awes me. In the most solemn of all hours He was as peaceful at heart as an unruffled sea, and as mighty. He welcomed

the shock of death, which terrifies you and me, glad that His earthly mission had been accomplished, and buoyed by the actual sight—a privilege often granted to us also—of the home to which He was hastening.

Yes, it not infrequently happens that mortals in their last extremity, just as kindly death is loosening the bonds which unite soul and body, have visions of those who will meet them when their farewells to earth have been said. Almost every family can recite an incident of that kind, and tell you how, under its influence, some dear one has passed away with a smile on his lips. And why should not these things be true if God is really our Father and we are really His children? Why should He not send His ministering angels to us at such a time, when timid souls touch a strange shore, to bid them a welcome into the world of which they have dreamed in their loftier moods.

And if the eyes of the dying may be thus opened, why may not the time come when the eyes of the living shall be equally blessed? If heaven is close to us, and only a thin partition divides the two homes, it must be possible when we become pure in heart to hear and see even as the Lord did. It

will not be too much to ask when we shall so live as to merit the privilege. This world presses too heavily on our hearts just now, but by and by, when we comprehend the significance of the other world, it will be very different.

Your immortal life began before your cradled infancy. You are in the midst of it at the present moment. Mortality and immortality go hand in hand for a while up many a steep hill and into many a deep valley. It is God's will that they shall keep company, that which dies and that which cannot die. They are strange comrades, but they get on very well together. When the right moment arrives they take a tender farewell of each other, and then we discover their several peculiarities and the curious difference between the two. The mortal is weary and worn. It has come up from the dust, and longs to get back to it. It has accomplished its task, its work is done, and it has deserved the rest it seeks. I have no doubt that the body is glad to get back to the sod again, that it may help the violets to blossom and the grass to grow. But the soul is not tired. It has just begun to recognize itself. It has plumed its wings for many a short

flight, and is ready to soar. It has learned the alphabet of life, nothing more, and is prepared to study its principles and its mysteries.

A tired body, a fresh and vigorous soul! Why should they not part company? Let them clasp hands in a tender farewell, the one to go back whence it came, the other to go forward to achieve its great destiny. I do not know why they ever came together, this mortal and this immortal, but I can see a good reason for their parting and why the soul should lay aside its torn and shattered garment and be clothed upon with a spiritual body.

This Easter morning is whispering about heaven. The soft, low voices of angels are sounding in our ears. Dear ones from on high are here in our earthly homes. They have not forgotten us, for true human love, like God's love, never dies; and to-day, when all the earth is filled with the echoing words, "He is risen," they stretch out invisible hands and cry, "We, too, have risen, and you shall rise!"

There is no death. Those who have gone are more truly and more thoroughly alive than we are, and our best life will come when death does us a great service and sets us free.

GREATER THINGS THAN THESE

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also.—St. John xiv., 12.

THESE words are like a chime of bells pealing forth the triumphal song of perfected humanity, the humanity that is to be when we get near enough to Christ to touch the hem of His garment. Or they are like the prophecy of some great seer whose eyes penetrate the future, and who tells us of the things which will be within reach when we slough off this inordinate greed for material gain and begin to explore the realm of the spiritual.

I know nothing in the whole range of Scripture more dazzling, more inspiring, than that brief sentence uttered by One who knew as none other has ever known the marvellous capacities of a human soul. They shine with so much light that we cannot look at them without protected eyes. They point to such excellence that we cannot contemplate

it without wonder and amazement. What a star is to the child, that and more is this thought to the man.

It is well-nigh incredible that within us lie dormant powers which when developed will so transfigure and transform us that what we now call miracles will become the soul's daily food. Miracles, indeed! What we ignorantly call miracles are only incidents in perfect accord with a law higher than that with which we are acquainted. What is impossible to-day will become commonplace to-morrow. These "greater works" which we are to do when we reach the higher spiritual level are beyond the reach of my imagination. I only know that Christ could not deceive and that His promise holds good forever. I therefore humbly wait for this new age to appear, with its new humanity, and wait in perfect faith that our children's children will prove that all the sons of God can draw on God's omnipotence to make this life wider, deeper, and sweeter than we have ever dreamed.

The world is not yet spiritual. The soul is still an unexplored territory. Its command of the body,

which is merely the appendage of the soul,—not its master, but its servant,—and its dominion over the elements of earth and air are as yet almost wholly undeveloped. I hardly dare think of what lies within reach of the soul which is penetrated with the spirit of Christ. With reverent eyes I look to the future, but I can do no more than wonder. The soul is asleep, dormant, sluggish. We know little about it, though it is the chief part of us, the only enduring part. When it awakes, recognizes itself, begins to exercise its powers, heaven will come nearer to us and earth will be brighter. A new life will be ours, as different from the present as the trained scholar is different from the untutored savage.

It is deeply rooted in our inner consciousness that we are slowly moving toward these high achievements. There is nothing in the heart of man so grand and uplifting as the firm faith in our ability constantly to outgrow ourselves. We are limitless in capacity, and that thought is the highest inspiration. Whence comes this thought, whence comes this faith in ourselves? It must have its origin outside of ourselves. When He breathed into us the

breath of His own life, at that moment the thought and the faith opened the door and entered our being, never more to depart. The God within must ever seek the God without until the two become one. It is this imperfect life which makes another life necessary, for otherwise there can be no completeness to the soul. But once let the two worlds interpenetrate each other and nothing more can be required to make it possible to fulfil our great destiny.

Let me illustrate: That interesting little creature, the bee practically lives in two worlds. The one, that of the hive, is finite, while the other is infinite. In the hive it stores its treasures, establishes a community governed by decrees, its head a queen. Scientists tell us that invaders are repelled with courage, that customs are established, and that infractions are met with severity. Its other world stretches from the door of the hive to the horizon line, and this world produces the honey which is gathered in minute particles and makes it possible for the bee to live through the winter. It carries into its narrow house the sunshine which warms the air through which it wings its way to its daily dask.

The soul, like the bee, must have two worlds, and

it must make excursions into that other world and bring back the thoughts it suggests or it can never be its best self. A soul without a heaven is a soul living in the dark. It is heaven which gives us our diviner impulses, our holier aspirations, and fills this narrow earthly life with sweetness and beauty.

It is from heaven that those influences come which so develop and expand our natures that the future grows brighter as we travel toward it. And in that future, if the spirit of Christ is in us, we shall live amid those higher laws whose product we now call miracles.

WHEN SHALL WE WALK BY SIGHT?

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.—St. John xvi., 12.

THE world has had in any given age as much truth as it was able to bear. A truth misunderstood is the equivalent of an untruth, just as firearms in the hands of a child are a danger. When a person has acquired the due amount of intelligence he may be safely intrusted with a gun, but ignorance will not escape injury from it. When men have reached that period of evolution which demands new truths they have somehow come as lightning came out of the cloud at the bidding of Franklin. New truths seem to be concealed from us until we have special use for them, and then inspired lips are unsealed and the revelation is made.

We have never been able to bear any larger knowledge of the immortal life than we have possessed,

and it has therefore been denied to us. We have not been sufficiently developed, either intellectually or spiritually, to endure the blazing light, and so the curtains have been drawn down, the full sunshine has been shut out, and we have seen "through a glass darkly." Our conception of the future has been heretofore of the vaguest character. We have believed in another life, and our belief has lightened the burden and set a rainbow against our tears, and filled us with a yearning after the departed which has robbed death of its terrors, but our ideas have been indefinite and confused, and we have been unable to discuss the subject even with ourselves.

Why is this so? It has given us great pain at times, and we have sighed as though immortality might after all prove to be a dream, beautiful, uplifting, but still a dream. Why have we had so little knowledge, and incorrect knowledge, of that life to which we are all hastening? In my poor judgment it is an added evidence of the wise plan on which all things are conducted. Christ's words recur to me, and I feel sure that we have heretofore known all that we could bear, all that we were fitted to make use of. We get what we need at the time

we need it and are prepared for it. If this is true along the historic path of material progress, it is equally true in the realm of religion.

To the untutored or undisciplined mind a perfect revelation of what heaven is and of the environment of the soul in that other world would be incalculable unwisdom, and in the great majority of cases a positive and alarming injury. This life has a divine purpose; but that purpose would be wholly defeated if our knowledge of the future were suddenly enlarged. The heavy burdens we bear, the struggles in which we are engaged, the bitter tears we are forced to shed, the disappointment of our fondest hopes which we are compelled to endure, are all blows of the hammer and chisel which shape the rough block of marble into a priceless statue. Life as at present constituted would be incomplete without hardship and sorrow. It may not always be so, but it is so now. To those who find it specially difficult to use their troubles for a high end and who at times sink in despair, a perfect knowledge of the other world might prove the irresistible temptation to commit a crime. The universal dread of death and this uncertainty concerning the future is one of

the strongest safeguards of the present life. We bear the ills we have and gain a sweeter character by our patience and endurance; whereas, if we knew more we might cross the border line through sheer desperation and so lose the very object for which we were placed in this lower world.

But the time is coming when we shall know more because we can bear more. I can see the first streaks of light above the hilltops, and am sure that by and by the fogs and mists in which we now dwell will be swept away by the light of a brighter if not of a perfect day. God's revelations come no faster than they are called for. Christ meant a great deal when He declared, "I have yet many things to say unto you," and I think He has been saying them one by one through the ages, giving in proportion to our ability to bear, and adding nothing more when the limit of our ability to use was reached. Many things have been told to our fathers, more has been told to us, and much more will be told to our children's children.

Are we prepared for an actual demonstration of the immortal life? I know we long for it, hunger and thirst for it, and pray for it, but would it be

safe to answer that prayer? Are we in a condition of mind and soul to bear the truth, or would it prove too much for us? Can you look at the sun? Can you inwardly digest the absolute certainty of another life? If immortality were no longer a matter of faith, but a fact so clearly proved that denial would be impossible, just as it would be impossible to deny the law of gravitation, could you stand the strain? The longing is a hint that we are in process of preparation, but the change in our outlook, in our motives, would be so great that we should not become accustomed to the new order of things in many years.

I know that Christ did not walk by faith but by knowledge. He lived in the future and drew strength from it. The to-morrow of heaven lifted the burden of each sorrowful to-day. At some period in our development, how far distant I know not, we shall have a new heaven, and that will give us a new earth. Our sight will not be dim, but clear. We shall not hope that our loved ones are near, for we shall know it to be true. This life of simple faith is beautiful, and we have trod many a difficult path under its benign influence. But at

last—aye, ere long, perhaps—heaven and earth will touch each other. We shall be prepared for the greater truth, and the dear Lord will send some messenger to announce it. God is always present in His world, and He will tell us more when we are able to endure it. Until then keep your faith pure and watch the coming of the morning.

YOUR SOUL

My soul cleaveth unto the dust.—Psalm cxix., 25.

THERE is one fact which startles me every time I think of it, namely, that my soul is merely a tenant of my body and will some time move out of it. When that happens the body may be sorry to part with its companion, but the soul will be glad to get beyond all physical limitations.

We are not as enthusiastic over this fact as we should be, because we do not fully appreciate it. Neither do we appreciate the sunshine, for the simple reason that it comes to us as a matter of course and is so abundant. If we were living on the moon, where every night is a month long, we should keenly watch for the coming of each day, and gather in multitudes on the hilltops to catch its first rays and wonder at the glory of the dawn. As it is, the sun is so generous with its gifts that we

neither stop to think of our dependence on it nor consider it necessary to be grateful because it fills the broad earth with harvests.

I venture to say that for a like reason God is neglected by us. If He were not so good we should look to Him more frequently. His excess of kindness blinds us to the fact that He is at all kind. If He were a mere despot, like the fabled deities of Olympus, and we were forced to placate Him, to win His favor by sacrifices, we should keep in mind the value of His helpfulness and make it a point before every undertaking to win His favor. But since He loves us even as a father loves his children, and gives His angels charge concerning us, in constant solicitude lest we stumble, we appreciate very little that He has done, and in our prayers ask for more.

There is no mystery in creation which equals the union of a body and a soul, and yet nine tenths of our time is given to the body and the remaining one tenth is grudgingly given to the soul. We could hardly be more devoted to the body if it were all we have and there were no soul. This is a curious fact; it is a puzzle, it is a marvel. To guard a copper penny with constant vigilance and pay no

attention to a coin of gold would be regarded as unmixed folly. It would indicate ignorance of comparative values. And yet an observant visitor from another planet who should watch our daily lives would say that we have not discovered that there is such a thing as a soul. In many cases his conclusion would be justified.

All the religion that I care for is contained in the simple injunction, "Remember that you have a soul, and govern yourself accordingly." I want very little more than that for the proper conduct of my life. If I obey I shall be kept busy during the full term of my mortal life, and shall have no time to discuss theological details. That injunction is to me what his crown is to a king — the symbol of sovereignty. And as the acceptance of a crown involves the duty of living a kingly life, so my acknowledgment of the possession of something that cannot die involves a responsibility which ought to make me broad-shouldered, large-hearted, and noble.

Think of it! You can live such a life that you can see visions, and the doors of heaven will swing on their hinges and give you a glimpse of the future

long before you reach its threshold. You can, if your soul rather than your body dominates you, reach such a stage that there will be another Jacob's ladder in your life, with angels ascending and descending. There is no reason that I can see why your soul, though embodied, should not be visited in friendly, helpful fashion by souls that have become disembodied by death.

Do I state this deliberately as a firm conviction? Most assuredly; and so rich is that conviction in inspiration and encouragement that I would sooner part with everything else I possess rather than surrender it. And the conviction is well grounded, and is sanctioned by every page of the Testament, the Old and the New alike. Take that element out of the Bible, and you have very little left. Take it out of the story of the Christ, and you lose your interest in it. I do not know of any form of religion, in any age or clime, which has not that fact as its chief corner-stone. Indeed, I cannot conceive of a religion which drops a veil down between us and heaven. We should walk in darkness. Men of science tell us that if the sun were blotted out everything would be instantly frozen solid; and, in

like manner, if you blot that fact out of our religion we should be no better than a multitude of icicles.

I must therefore look after the welfare of my soul with vigilant care. I will not be like the man who spends all his money in embellishing the room he lives in and then starves himself, but like one who regards his house as his home for a while, but thinks more of his intellectual and spiritual culture than of any outward adornments.

I am immortal! I should never forget it, but should carry myself as one who cherishes that truth. No matter what my conditions in life may be, whether I be poor or rich, learned or unlettered, well or ill, struggling or at leisure, I am immortal. I shall outlive my body and my sorrows, my tears and my sighs, all hardships and heartbreakings, for God—my God—will help me through it all, and His Christ has prepared a place for me where I shall dwell in peace and be at rest.

A KERNEL OF CORN

I am the resurrection, and the life.—St. John xi., 25.

THE relation of this life to the next is a mystery very difficult to understand. Why it should be necessary for us to pass a certain length of time in this preliminary stage of existence before we are transferred to a larger and wider sphere is a very puzzling question.

Some good and thoughtful people are of the opinion that there are various planes of work and experience and that this earthly life is only one in the long series which ends in "the third heaven" of which St. Paul speaks, or the "heaven of heavens" to which the Old Testament refers. Of this, however, I say nothing, because I know nothing. Whatever else there may be in store for us besides this immediate life and the life which is

close at hand is to me a matter of very little consequence. Speculation may be profitable to some, but so far as I am concerned I am quite indifferent. The two lives, to-day's and to-morrow's, entirely satisfy my craving, and I am too busy with present preparation for an indefinite future to be disturbed by the various theories of various scholars. I am satisfied that I am getting ready for something which God will give me by and by, and so my mind and heart are quite at rest.

There must be a special meaning in the words of the text, and if we can discover it we shall bear the ills to which flesh and soul are heirs with all the more fortitude and resignation. Christ is the source of spiritual resurrection! Without some close relation to His revelation of law we cannot reach the consummation of our highest thoughts and aspirations. All that happens here, both tears and joys, life and the loss of life in death—if Christ and we walk side by side, and if His outlook becomes ours—so enriches and develops the soul that immortality will not be strange to us when we cross its threshold. Christ in us is the element of growth, the energy of an evolution, which in time will broaden

and deepen the higher nature and bring us into harmony with God's great universe.

Let me illustrate. I place a kernel of corn in the ground. That kernel contains possibilities which are beyond computation. We wonder why it is important thus to bury it, and wonder more when told that by doing so we are really giving to it a new and better life. We have learned, however, that if it is not planted it will remain a simple and single kernel forever, while if we do bury it it will in the autumn present us with a stalk bearing full ears of corn.

The moment we bury that kernel it begins to absorb something. It throbs with ambitious hopes and feels within itself the power of indefinite growth. It puts forth its energy, sends down its roots, sends up its shoots, drinks in what the soil so freely gives, uses the energizing mystery of sunshine and dew, and by dying to its existence as a kernel enters on another existence, larger and better.

The sun could look down on that buried kernel and say, "I am your resurrection and your life. Without me you would be nothing and could be nothing." Every word of that statement would be

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literally true. There is nothing figurative about it. It contains no metaphor, but an actual fact. Without the sun the kernel would be so chilled that growth would be impossible. The warm rays kindle its inner and dormant life, fill it with the hope to achieve its mission, tell it what its destiny is, and encourage it to achieve that destiny. The very storms which beat on the stalk when it is coming to maturity force it to send its roots deeper in order to keep itself unbroken, and the showers of rain which so gratefully quench its thirst and make it vigorous are all secondary causes from the first great cause, the sun. If the cornstalk is conscious of its origin and mission, if it obeys the law of its being, it absorbs what is necessary to make it strong and rejects what will make it weak, and in doing so becomes mature, bearing in its arms such abundance that the farmer is repaid for his toil during the cool spring months.

So with the soul of man. It is planted in this life amid many disagreeable contingencies, but they are all necessary to its development. The soil is in many respects repulsive, and we wonder why things are as they are. Our ignorance cannot grasp the

wisdom of God, and we ask, "Why?" a thousand and a thousand times. But the Christ above us is the sunshine that warms our experiences until they give us of their hidden energy. Our tears are the falling dew; our struggles are the storms which send our roots deeper. He, the Sun, is our resurrection, bringing to the surface of character the strongest elements that lie hidden within us. He, the Sun, is also the life of our life, for He tells us how to grow, what to absorb, and what to reject.

The soul that lives in Him has a kind of life that is fruitful, and when that soul has produced its crop of good deeds and holy thoughts the God of all the earth will lift it into a nobler life and give it a grander task and a wider opportunity.

LIKE AN APPLE TREE

For every tree is known by his own fruit.—St. Luke vi., 44.

THE word tree occurs in the Bible many scores of times. It seems to lend itself with peculiar grace and force to any reference to the spiritual nature of man. The good are compared to trees on a river's bank, where sustenance is plentiful, their roots striking deep into the rich soil and their branches bearing abundant fruit. The wicked are referred to as trees in a barren soil, whose roots are parched with thirst and whose branches bear nothing better than withered fruit.

I remember one summer afternoon spent in an orchard under an apple tree which was greatly prized by the farmer. I was in that impressionable mood when one seems to be influenced by two worlds—the visible, which appeals to the senses, and the invisible, which appeals to the imagination.

I was in God's larger temple, and unseen acolytes were swinging a censer which filled the air with the perfume of new-mown hay and fragrant blossoms. The tree that sheltered me was a type and symbol of human life, and the lesson it taught I have never forgotten.

First, its roots sank deep in the soil and were hourly fed in the mysterious laboratory of nature, just as the soul's roots go down into the productive faith which nourishes it. The soil of that orchard was apparently commonplace, and even offensive, and in like manner the experiences of life are apparently unworthy of notice and incapable of producing any worthy or noble or highly valued result.

In a way so strange that no man can follow it, that tree drew from the black loam the nutriment of its growth and strength and development. It was filled with the vigorous sap of life, and like a giant was able to resist the tempest and the storm. So can the soul draw the elements of sterling manhood and womanhood from the ordinary events of every day. To look on the happenings which have fallen to your lot, you naturally conclude that your life is hardly worth the living. No greatness is possible

under such circumstances. The longings within you cannot be satisfied, for you do not fit your surroundings, and your surroundings do not fit you. The tree would say the same of the soil if it were gifted with speech and intelligence, for nothing can seem further away from a ripe apple than a spadeful of dirt. And yet, behold the tree engaged in its daily task. There are the green leaves, there are the blossoms, with a tint not to be found on any painter's palette, and in the frosty October the ripe fruit will drop from the branches.

From your poor and ordinary life you can produce results which rival those of the tree when you learn the tree's secret. The tree does its best with what it has, and is satisfied. While doing its best the miracle takes place, and you find a leaf, a fragrant blossom, a ripe apple. You are surprised, for how could they come from such a soil? Still, there they are, and if you taste the apple you will see that it is real and ripe and luscious. So, from the commonplaces of life the soul, when its roots are embedded in the rich soil of faith, can evolve a character very like an archangel's. Common tears and common smiles and common struggles can, like a sculptor's

chisel, give us such a shape of symmetry that God will welcome us to heaven with a "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Second, I thought of something else and something grander as I lay there on the grass, for I was tired and troubled, and perhaps a bit discouraged, as we are all apt to be at times. The leaves, the blossoms, the fruit, and what then? Have I learned my lesson in full, or is there more to know? The nipping frost will come to the tree and to me, and after that the orchard will have its coverlet of snow and will fall asleep, as I shall also. No more leaves, no more blossoms, no more fruit? Has the whole story been told? Does the winter end all time as it ends the year? Not with the apple tree certainly—then why with me? Shall I fall while the tree continues to flourish?

There is a spring, a glorious spring, ahead. The snows will melt, the frosts will be killed by sunshine, the sluggish ground will wake up, the warm rains will start the sap in that old trunk once more, there will be new leaves waving above the grave of the fallen, new blossoms in place of those which have changed to apples, and new fruit in the new October.

And as for myself? If I have resembled the tree thus far, shall the resemblance cease when the frost comes? Do I bear fruit but once? Then were it scarce worth my while to bear fruit at all. For me, too, there is a spring,— the spring of immortality,— and in that better clime I shall grow as here I cannot grow, and bear such fruit as I have never yet dreamed of. The grave is simply my winter. I shall sleep, but I shall be wakened. The snow will cover my body, but not my soul. The thought is a benediction and an inspiration. I seem like one who is ready to drop by the wayside through sheer weariness of strife, but who hears distant music, and, knowing that the Home is not far off, takes new heart of courage.

Out of the commonplaces of this earthly life, accepted in good faith as from the providence of God, and used with prayerful and careful skill, is shaped that character which must have an immortal life for its further development. The man who faces today with calm resignation and keeps a high purpose in mind will find that heaven has come to him before it is time for him to go to heaven.

LITTLE DUTIES

Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.—St. Luke xix., 17.

IN the sight of God the magnitude of the work given you to do is of small importance, but the faithfulness with which you do it is the prime concern. If you are endowed with genius, you must produce the results which genius predicts, and if you have only one talent to care for, then only one talent's worth of duty will be required. The amount of ability you have is the gift of nature, and you can take no credit to yourself for its possession. But the use you make of your faculties depends wholly on yourself, and therein lies your merit or demerit.

When you take your place among men they judge you both by what God has given you and by what you have done for yourself. But when God

judges you He eliminates from the problem of your worthiness the gifts He gave you, and approves or disapproves according to the work you have done or failed to do with those gifts. You are reckoned among the great by your fellows if you have done great things with great faculties, but you are equally great in heaven if you have done the best you could with slender faculties. Therein lies the vast difference between the verdict of men and the verdict of the Almighty. And since our happiness hereafter depends not so much on the kind of work we do as on the way in which we do it, we can afford to banish envy and covetousness, and satisfy ourselves with the honest toil which at the end of the day will bring us His words of welcome into another life.

When men estimate our worth, motives count for little and actual results for much. This is because our judgment is narrow. With God, actual results count for little and motives for much. Thus, a really heroic man may live so remote that the world's eye never rests on him, and he may go on from little day to little day, and at last drop out of sight without ever hearing his name mentioned.

His fellows have a false standard, and, measured by that standard, he is no more than a dropping leaf or a flake of snow. It is not so, however, with God. Some of the saintliest characters which this earthly life produces are known only in heaven. They are formed in the humblest and most obscure surroundings, and are appreciated only by their intimates, but in heaven they will stand in the front rank of noble souls. They have had little to do, but a great deal to bear. Their sphere of labor has been confined to a hard struggle with adversity, to the endurance of pinching poverty, to service at the bedside of an afflicted loved one, but they have found the presence of God there, and they have been visited by the angels, and their poor human nature has been enriched and mellowed and ripened. Their possessions have consisted of faith and love and fidelity. But when the other life opens to their view they will find that they are ready for its opportunities, and that they need no further preparation to enter upon its duties and to make use of its privileges.

I want to say, therefore, that wherever you are and whatever you are doing, if you are with the

Lord and He is with you, you should be more than satisfied. Wealth and fame are myths, delusive myths, which, by a sort of hallucination, we think much of, but of which the angels think very little, while character, purity of heart, faithfulness to duty, which by another hallucination we think very little of, are thought much of in heaven.

If you have a piece of delicate and intricate machinery it would not be well to say that the large wheels are more important than the little ones, for each is of equal importance with all the others. If your watch is faulty in any one part it is faulty in all parts. The perfection of the whole depends on the perfection of each minute portion, and it would be folly for any small bit of machinery to declare that it was of no special value and could do as it pleased. It must be pleased to do its duty, though it is a duty so small that it is never seen except with the microscope of the maker. Otherwise the whole watch is practically worthless.

In the spiritual universe of God the same rule prevails. There is no such thing as a little life or an insignificant life. No one can do as he pleases, but all must do as God pleases, for then only can

God's great plan be perfected. You are needed by the Most High, and though you be the humblest of the humble, with nothing to do and all to bear, with such narrow quarters that no one can find you except the angels, still, as God's child, with earth growing dim and heaven growing brighter every day, you are making for yourself a bright and glorious future, and when you reach the other shore and look back you will see that your soul has needed nothing but an opportunity to grow, and that your quiet and perhaps lonely life has afforded that opportunity in abundance. We must therefore be brave and faithful to the end, and then the hand of God will lead us to our reward.

UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.—Romans xiv., 7.

SOMEBODY has said that thoughts are things. The phrase is unfortunate, because it is misleading and inaccurate. This world is made up of things and forces. Thoughts are more subtle than mere things and far more potential. They are forces which change a man's life for better or for worse.

If you apply the principles of wireless telegraphy to spiritual concerns you will see the full scope of my statement. We may safely do this, for there is a spiritual law running parallel to every physical law, and no man can discover a physical law without suggesting a corresponding spiritual law. In this way all thinkers stand shoulder to shoulder, lifting the world out of the old into the new.

The wireless telegrapher tells us that a word or its equivalent creates a vibration of the air, as a pebble creates a ripple in the pond, and this vibration speeds on its way to the destined terminus, however distant, and there makes itself known and felt. We are living in an age of miracles, or, in other words, an age of discovery, and this is one of the startling results.

In like manner a word of scorn or of praise hurled into the spiritual universe from a heart that loves or hates becomes a living force, not lost in the general confusion as a single note is lost in the multitude of sounds, but going straight to the man or woman against whom or in favor of whom it is directed. That other heart at the farther end of the line, perhaps half broken by remorse or timidly hoping for better days, is the receiving station of this wireless telegraphy. Your thought, critical or gentle, strikes that other heart with an impact which either hurts or helps. You may not know that your thought has taken its flight, that other person may not know whence it comes, but all the same he is uplifted or depressed by it.

This may seem strange and even incredible, but,

while it is to-day a possible fact, it may to-morrow become a demonstrated truth, and the next day it may change the whole outlook of the spiritual world. It has the appearance of a miracle, but profounder knowledge always seems miraculous, while in reality we only climb from the lower to the higher realm of law, see farther, and understand God better.

A spoken thought is even now recognized as a force when speaker and hearer are within earshot of each other. An oath, a compliment, a bit of vocal flattery, goes through the ear to the heart and kindles a flame of resentment or of happiness. What you say becomes part of another man's life and excites passion or stimulates friendship. Why may there not be a quicker transit than the slow and dull ear affords? Why may not the time come when we can convey our thoughts without the coarse medium of words? There are no words between us and heaven. A prayer is a longing of the soul, "uttered or unexpressed." God speaks to hearts. The impression is instantaneous, as when the sun makes its mark on the photographer's plate. There are "unseen beings who walk the earth both when we wake

and when we sleep," but they use no words. They make us feel their presence, and we are as sure that they are close by as though we heard a trumpet call. What they would say steals into the heart, for our poor ears cannot catch it. We hear nothing, but we know that they are giving us a helping hand. Is there any language in heaven except that of thoughts?

When the world grows older why may we not speak to each other without this cumbersome factor of spoken words? Progress is indefinite and infinite, and we are moving in that direction. We catch glimpses of the possible already. A look, a pressure of the hand, and sympathy or contempt are complete. Enlarge the circumference and you have a new truth. No one needed to tell the Christ what he thought. He read the heart as an open book. He looked at a man and the man's story was already told. Lips had nothing to do with it. The Master felt the woes and shared the joys of humanity. A subtler language than we can use was at His command.

A thought is the wireless message of soul to soul. Your neighbor's welfare is affected by your kind

or unkind criticism of him. When we deal with subtle and far-reaching forces of this kind, then religion, which enjoins charity, is brought to the forefront as the most important factor in human life. If you would be at your best you must love your neighbor, for your thought of him will either lift him up or trip him to a fall. The whole trend and swing of the universe bid a man to be honest, just, and gentle, for we are so bound together that nobility in one kindles nobility in all, and one man's hurt is an injury to all. Since we are marching, one great company, from time to eternity, let us go as brothers, with a kindly word and a helping hand whenever opportunity offers.

CHRISTMAS MORNING

We have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him.—St. Matthew ii., 2.

CHRIST struck the keynote of the soul's highest development. On the Judean hillside His voice sounded clear and strong, to the wonderment and amazement of His hearers, and it has reverberated through the ages, to the wonderment and amazement of every generation since.

We have been practising this new music for many a century, sometimes with a feeble degree of success, but oftentimes in blundering and unsatisfactory fashion. We dimly appreciate its beauties and are secretly convinced that when we can put His revealed thoughts into daily life, into social and civic institutions, we shall reach the perfect stature of the perfect man; but progress is so slow that

despair treads on the heels of effort, and in some moods we wonder if that ideal religion is not, after all, a beautiful dream never to be realized. The world moves with a very faltering step toward brotherly love. The love of self is still victor, and the millennium of peace on earth and good-will toward men is only occasionally seen, and then as a vision of ecstatic possibility too distant for any hope to reach it.

But the world is still young. We play with toys of wealth and fame in the eagerness of childhood, but we are moving on, growing in stature, broadening in our outlook, and can once in a while catch a glimpse of heaven. Centuries are simply seconds in eternity, and as they pass we climb to a higher level, slowly and painfully, but still we climb. By and by we shall understand the Christ, and in that glorious moment we shall try to live His life. Then all will be changed. We shall no longer be children with toys, but full-grown men with God's work to do and hearts eager to do it.

What could be more appropriate or more symbolical of the divine purpose than the circumstances attending the advent of Christ? It was not the royal

entry of a philosophy, but the incoming of a religion which held two worlds in its arms, welcoming this life, with its duties, and looking forward to the peace and progress of eternity. The poverty of the manger and the stable were typical of the estimate in which an immortal soul holds that greed of gain, that hunger for wealth which has robbed us of conscience and honor. The shepherds who followed the guiding light and brought frankincense and myrrh represented the upward glance of humanity —the aspirations of the spirit when in thoughtful mood. The angels who gathered, a mighty host, and sang their overture of welcome, were a proof positive that those above are interested in the welfare of those below, and are ever ready to overshadow us with their heavenly presence.

Christ came at great cost to Himself and out of a boundless love for mankind, to give us a new impulse, the impulse of a new inlook and outlook. The world gazed upward with a clear vision for the first time, and what it saw has become a part of its life. We are just beginning to understand that personal integrity is a jewelled crown which the

poorest of earth may win and wear ; that honesty of purpose lies at the foundation of happiness ; that peace is better than war, and that omnipotence and purity of heart are closely allied. Our dim eyes look to the stars when the home is saddened by death, and a fragrant hope, not to be denied, leads us to look forward to another home in another clime where we shall greet the departed who have always come at our call, though their dear forms have been invisible. All the centuries that have passed since that first Christmas morning have ripened mankind as a field of wheat is ripened in the sunshine, and as we think of our privileges and blessings the Christ stands near by to whisper, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

One can live comfortably and profitably if he has faith to call upon as a child calls on its father. Events and experiences arrange themselves as parts of a great plan ; they have a meaning which it is our duty to discover and make use of. Faith is the only thing in the universe that gives good cheer when otherwise we should be in despair. The man of faith stands erect when the man of doubt bends and breaks. Faith fills to-day with the hope of to-

morrow, and we go to sleep in the certainty of waking in a better land.

Christmas morning is the symbol of all this and of much more that cannot be disclosed because there is no language in which it may be expressed.

TO SERVE GOD

And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind.—1 Chronicles xxviii., 9.

HOW differently we look on life at different periods! We really live three or four kinds of life between the cradle and the grave.

In early youth, for example, the days go with leaden feet. From the half-holiday in the middle of the week to the other half-holiday at its end seems to be a small section of eternity. The hours of boyhood are longer than the months of manhood. In later years, on the other hand, when the coins in the treasury of time have grown to be small in number, we rush by the weeks as we rush by the telegraph poles when on an express train.

But what an exquisite season our youth is! The boy opens his eyes on a beautiful world, and every passing moment is a special delight. He is in

harmony with the universe and joins in the chorus as the morning stars sing together. He may not appreciate the situation, but he is charmed by it. He wants to live forever, and the thought of death chills, possibly terrifies him. In the full and magnificent flow of physical vitality, he dreams great dreams, builds castles in the air of which no architect could make a definite plan, and is happier than any language can express. It is ordained that we shall begin our long career in that way.

When manhood comes stealing on with slippered feet the dreams fade away and we stand face to face with grave and stern realities. We need muscle of body and muscle of mind to do our work. Disappointments check our hoped-for progress, and so far as this world is concerned we feel sure of very little. The optimism of earlier days gives way, and the tendency, both spiritual and mental, is in the direction of a mild kind of pessimism which is as harmful as a drop of poisonous acid in a glass of pure spring-water. We are all of us conscious of this, and we all of us yield to it in some degree unless we know of a well from which we can draw water without the accompanying drop of poison.

I venture the assertion that it is impossible for any man to go through life keeping a cheerful temper and a trusting heart unless he has that series of uplifting thoughts which it is the privilege of our religion to furnish. But with those thoughts in his firm possession he is superior to any possible experience. Life makes one tired, but religion is like the sweet sleep from which he rises refreshed. Life makes one hungry, but religion is like the food which nourishes the worn tissues. Life is a stormy season, but religion is the sun that breaks through the clouds and floods the landscape with longed-for light and heat.

It would be folly to deny that from morning to evening we have a hard day's work. It is not easy to live comfortably or serenely ; it is impossible to do so without religion of some kind. Your very health depends largely on your state of mind, and when your mind has soared to that realm in which your God dwells, not only does your body respond, but your whole outlook undergoes a change. If you look up and see nothing but darkness, the shadow of that darkness englooms your days ; but if your upward gaze discovers God and immortality

your pathway becomes light, even though it be rugged and difficult. If there is nothing ahead of you, if graves are simply graves and nothing more, if broken ties shall remain forever broken, your mental attitude produces a depression which is close to despair. But if, on the contrary, you are convinced that the universe has a Master, and that your road to a better world lies through struggles as well as joys, through tears as well as smiles, and if by faith you can look forward to rest, to higher activities, to reunion, there comes into the soul a something, a dynamic energy, a cheering force which makes despair impossible and changes despondency to hope.

This kind of religion is what the boy needs when passing through the formative period, when he is laying the foundations of a character. It does not interfere with his joyousness, it is not a cloud in his sky, but an additional source of physical happiness.

It is what the man needs when he is in the midst of affairs and when the pessimistic forces are at work. It illumines his ideal, as a white statue is illumined by a calcium light, and teaches him that

loyalty to eternal things is better than the gainful success which he must leave behind him.

It is what old age needs when it faces the inevitable, for it opens the door of the future and discloses such radiant facts that death is only a sweet sleep from which the soul rises to cross the threshold of eternal life. Religion crowns all periods of life with hope and joy.

THE LILY

Consider the lilies how they grow.—St. Luke xii., 27.

THERE is no flower more beautiful or more symbolical than the white pond-lily. At this season of the year it blossoms on the edge of every lake and forms a sort of lacework, like an exquisite fringe on a costly robe. The handicraft of nature has produced nothing which fills the air with sweeter perfume and nothing which teaches a more important lesson. It is a silent advocate of purity, and as we look on its fair petals, which impart a still more delicious odor as they begin to droop and wither, it appeals to us with an almost irresistible eloquence.

It is firmly rooted in the slime and mud at the bottom of the pond, but it rises above its origin like a white-robed angel, and is so superior to its environment that we wonder concerning the magic with which it appears to be endowed. If you were

to look at the seed and were to examine its offensive surroundings you would declare that such a product from such a habitation would be as impossible as it would be unexpected. But by a secret chemistry beyond the reach of our understanding it extracts from the discouraging mud a very miracle of beauty and furnishes us with an object-lesson that has to do with the spiritual nature of man. It proves that the elements of an unspeakable aroma are to be found in the most unpromising conditions, and that the effect may be greater than the apparent cause if circumstances are handled by the all-conquering energy which God has implanted in the seed. It has a distinct and lofty purpose in view, uses whatever will aid it in the accomplishment of that purpose, and sternly and unerringly rejects all else. What will help to make a lily it takes from the great laboratory, and what would mar the lily it refuses to absorb. It has a destiny to achieve, and, though the looker-on would declare that with such materials it is powerless, yet it steadily toils from day to day with a sublime faith in itself, until the prefect blossom floats on the surface of the water, greets the sunshine, and proclaims a victory.

I think we may follow the example of the lily and thus make our human lives more beneficent and profitable. What the lily does under the blind conduct of natural forces we can do under the direction of a pure and simple religion. The lily tells us how to reach the highest success, and shows us that it can be done by itself doing it.

Instead of deploring our surroundings and assuring ourselves that our failure comes from the lack of opportunity, if we were to make the best of what we have and bend our forces to changing evil into good, we should make such spiritual progress that the very angels would lend a helping hand, and God's smile of approval would give us the peace that passeth understanding. The lily, according to our logic, might very reasonably say that since it is embedded in mud we have no right to expect anything beyond a noxious weed. We reason in that way concerning ourselves and so excuse our shortcomings, forgive ourselves for our paltry deeds, and more than half believe that God will be equally merciful. But the lily pursues a different course with an entirely different result. The lily spirit is in the seed and the environment counts for nothing.

The very slime is compelled to contribute to its holy and divine ambition. It disdains the mean and base, or, rather, extracts from the base and mean whatever will add to its growth and furnish its perfume. In like manner, if we were so minded, and if we made use of the knowledge which God is ever ready to impart, we might use the most untoward experiences in the formation of a noble character. There is no temptation, no rugged portion of our upward climb, no sorrow that like a threatening storm breaks over our heads, no struggle that taxes our endurance to the utmost, which cannot be made to add energy to the soul. We must create greatness and goodness out of what we have, not out of what we wish we had. There is no life so lowly that it cannot be grand, and there is no condition which will not bring you nearer to heaven if you master it instead of allowing it to master you. The heart makes the life, not the life the heart. If you are embittered by your hard experience it is because you are looking through the wrong pair of eyes.

An embittered lily, because it grows in slime! No fragrance, because its root is embedded in the mud! A despairing, soul because life is hard, or

because you cannot have what you want or think you deserve, or what you envy in others! That is not religion; it is infidelity. That indicates a distrust of yourself, and, worse still, a distrust of God, since He has seen fit to surround you with hardships. You are able to do His will, and that will ought to be your will. No matter where you are or what you are, or by what circumstances you are environed, you are God's child, the angels are your friends, and, by and by, when you look back from the other shore you will see that the heavy hand was the wise and kindly hand.

Christ was like the lily. A manger for a cradle! Ostracized by those who should have loved Him, suspected by those who should have had confidence in Him, persecuted by those who should have kissed the hem of His raiment, and crucified by those who should have worshipped Him! Slime of human hatred! Filth of human passion! But the life so sweet, so calm, so filled with the perfume of Heaven, that we wear on our breast the symbol of His torture, the cross!

Behold the lily!

REJOICE ALWAY

And ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households.—Deuteronomy xii., 7.

IT is just as much our duty to enjoy life as it is to work or sleep. It is therefore very important that we should so arrange our lives that they will furnish the largest amount of enjoyment.

I do not say that any one can be perfectly happy all the time, for no part of our discipline is more needed by the soul than that which comes from the trials and disappointments and even the profound sorrows through which we are forced to pass.

One may even say that he who has never wept does not know the value of laughter, and that he who has not toiled along the hot and dusty road does not appreciate the bliss of sitting under the friendly branches of a tree, with a cool spring bubbling at his feet, for a short period of rest.

It is only when we are deprived of a blessing that we discover its worth, and he alone is grateful in its possession who knows what it is to get on without it.

I have heard an aged saint say that no man can rightly define the word heaven until he stands by a new-made grave. One may sometimes see more through his tears than when looking through the largest telescope that was ever made.

I do not ignore the serious or solemn side of life, but I assure you that if you add to the gloom by gloomy thoughts you not only make a mistake so far as your own comfort is concerned, but you are to that extent irreligious. On the other hand, when you preserve a cheerful attitude, when you brighten your life by dwelling on the good things you have, rather than on those you wish you had, and make yourself as happy as your circumstances allow, you are in the proper frame of mind to receive religious truth, you are in accord with the eternal plan and have taken the first step in the direction of true religion.

So long as you regard your environment as all wrong and unfitted to you, so long as you find fault because you think you are not where you ought to

be, just so long do you bar the way to a higher level and chain yourself to a dungeon floor. The angels, with their soothing and encouraging influence, can no more reach you than the sunshine can get through a window which you have deliberately bricked up. I had almost said that a human soul can so surround itself with an atmosphere of discontent and doubt that the Lord Himself cannot effect an entrance, while what is injurious because it is evil is as much at home as a poisonous plant that thrives on miasm. If you long for the light you will go to the spot where the light can reach you, but it is foolish to declare that there is no light when you sit in a dark corner where only ghostly shadows dwell.

There are very few lives in which a degree of happiness may not be found if it is sought for. But we must not forget that we must work to be happy, just as we work to be rich. If we want wealth we fix our minds upon it. We know that if we can discover its hiding-place our dreams will be realized. We plan to get it, and have sufficient confidence in ourselves to keep us on the alert. No opportunity escapes us, and we make the most of every one that presents itself.

I cannot see why this principle should not be applied to religion, neither can I see why it should not be equally successful. We go to get riches, but we expect happiness and contentment to come to us. We work for fame, for social influence, for all worldly good things, but it seldom occurs to us that we must also work for that mental and spiritual condition in which life is experienced at its best. And yet a man—that is the law as I understand it —should be as keen in his search for peace of mind, for resignation, for self-control, as he is for dollars, and should begin the task in the conviction that God wants him to be happy rather than miserable, and has so made the universe and arranged our environment that we may spend contented years in this lower sphere and be joyfully raised to a higher level after death.

If you look at life from your own standpoint, then you will say that I am a mere visionary ; that I have dreamed dreams which can never come true. But if you look at it from God's standpoint you will admit that you are in the wrong and that I am stating startling facts.

I cannot conceive of a religion which does not

lighten human burdens. I do not believe that God ever spoke a word in the way of revelation which was not intended to make the soul serene and happy. If we do not interpret the Bible after this fashion, then we misinterpret it. It is a closed book to us, and we have not learned to read it.

Never look on the dark side with dark feelings in your heart, for you thereby make the darkness darker still. Look at it from the conviction that God is overhead, a conviction which is like the lantern which the traveller carries in the night-time, and you will find reason to rejoice even when the clouds are heavy and the path is steep.

If Christ could walk with unfaltering steps to the place of crucifixion, because He knew that that was the road—the only road—to heaven, surely we can lay aside this unworthy habit of magnifying the petty ills of life, and, by faith in the Providence which has never yet deserted us and in the watchful care of the angels who attend us, can find occasion to rejoice every day until the setting sun ushers us into a world to which this is as the portico of the cathedral is to the cathedral itself.

CONSOLATION IN TIME OF TROUBLE

The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.—Deuteronomy xxxiii., 27.

THAT sentence is the corner-stone of the only true religion. When I have assured myself that these two statements contain actual facts which I can trust as implicitly as the sailor trusts his compass in a storm I need nothing more, for I have the highest possible motive, the most serene confidence that all things will work together for good, and my darkest hours are lighted by a sky full of stars.

The life of Christ is an amplification and an illustration of these words. They were uttered by the seer of Israel, but they were made into an object-lesson by the divine Nazarene. They were a dream in those old days, but they were changed into a reality when the "voice of one crying in the wilder-

ness" was heard on the hillsides of Judea and the world got its first glimpse of the highest possibilities which human nature can attain. The Son of God told the sons of men that the everlasting arms are literally underneath us, and when we saw Him in Gethsemane and on Calvary we knew that He spoke the truth.

I delight in the cheerfulness which religion affords. It brightens our sorrows as the setting sun tips the clouds with glory, and it lightens our burdens, of which there are many to be borne, as though an invisible being were lifting half the load. We must weep, for that is one of the experiences necessary to a spiritual life, but behind our tears, in the secret depths of the heart, is a radiant hope, a hope not to be parted with at any price, and it is like the lantern which the pilgrim carries as he wends his way along the dangerous path in the night.

The thought that the Lord of the universe is near at hand, that His ear is always open to your cry, that He cannot desert you to an untoward fate, that you and He have certain personal relations with each other by which your weakness can draw on

His strength, gives you an inward satisfaction, a joyful contentment, an uplifting faith, in the presence of which poverty almost becomes riches, and sickness health, and death itself a gain. Your belief in God as your protector and in the wondrous revelations of the Christ concerning duty and destiny are the subtle influences which form your character and enable you to meet vicissitudes as bravely as the knight met his opponents in the tournament, with this difference, that sometimes the knight was forced to lower his lance in defeat, while you, with the Spirit of the Universe on your side, must needs be always a conqueror. Who walks with God has nothing to fear. He takes no tremulous step, is sure of himself, and sure of heaven.

If religion is so priceless in the conduct of life, what estimate shall we put on it when the sun sets on our little day and we ask ourselves if there is a to-morrow? If it braces the nerves to an effort which brushes temptation aside and protects our integrity against the invasion of sin, what shall we say of it when our dearest and best beloved lies in that mysterious slumber of which we can never

speak without a feeling of awe, or look upon without dimmed eyes? How can such an experience as that be endured unless the heavens open as we gaze longingly upward? It is the one supreme moment in the soul's whole career, and if we are in despair, then it were better not to have been born. It is a spiritual crisis which puts its appraisement on the philosophy which we have formulated and defended. If there is nothing to be said at such a time, if love ends, and we feel that our loss is an eternal loss, then life is not worth the living. To give your heart, and to have your heart break because you gave it, is to suffer because you have done a noble deed. The world must have been strangely planned if that can happen. It is not a good world to live in, and its creation was a mere experiment which has resulted in dismal failure. If this life is all, then the all is a mere nothing, or worse than that—it is a pang, an anguish, an affliction.

But suppose I turn that picture to the wall and show you another. There is more than to-day for the soul. The sun will shine to-morrow even as it shines now. The loved one who has walked by your side, but who leaves you for a time, will walk

by your side in another clime, and though you may not see him during the rest of your journey he will watch over you as one in that vast "cloud of witnesses." He has gone, visibly gone, but invisibly he remains. He is better off than he could be in this lower world, and death has not destroyed or in any way marred his affection. On the other shore he will greet you, welcome you, and there renew the ties which have only apparently been broken.

That is what the Christ tells us. That is a revelation which corroborates the yearnings of human nature, a truth which ought to make heroes and heroines of all mankind. That kind of faith is based on the fact that God is wise, that we are here not to be tortured, but to do our work cheerily as best we can, that the light of heaven is shining on our paths as the sun shines on the wheat field and prepares it for the autumn harvest.

Say what you will, that faith is the most ennobling, the most enlarging element in human nature. Without it you may have genius and wealth and all that earth can give, but at heart you are a beggar. It is that belief which alone constitutes your riches.

Your doubts are like poison in the blood, but faith is health, vigor, and everything that can be desired. If we are on a journey to Nowhere, we are of all men most miserable, but since we are on our way Home,—ah, that is a different matter!

CHILDISH THINGS

But when I became a man, I put away childish things.—1 Corinthians xiii., 11.

ONE day during the last summer I was walking along the strand, listening to the regular and rhythmic pounding of the waves, when my attention was attracted to a couple of children on a dune close at hand. As I approached them I saw that they each had a little tin pail and a wooden spade. They would dig a deep hole in the sand or pile it up in fantastic shapes, and all the while would chirp like young birds in the sunshine. They were perfectly happy, and they needed only plenty of sand, a wooden spade, and a tin pail to make them so.

As I looked at the picture I envied those children their capacity for pleasure and sighed as I said to myself: "I wish I could be as happy as they are. They live in the present; the day is bright and

cloudless, and with that much they are entirely satisfied. The quality of character which anticipates the possible troubles of the future has not yet been developed. It is enough for them to be alive, and their enjoyment is complete and continuous."

Then something within me answered in this wise: "There is no reason why you should not be far happier than those children, but you must learn how to be. You must be taught the secret of happiness, and if you apply that secret to the circumstances in which you live you will have a serener and profounder happiness than childhood can ever know. Life furnishes pleasures for the man also, but they are not to be found with a wooden spade and a tin pail. They are the pleasures which come from work well done, from an aim in life which kindles all our powers into activity, from the faith which makes us noble and builds our years into a temple in which the everlasting God visits our souls while we worship and reveals to us the duties of to-day and the hopes of to-morrow."

So I went back to my little cottage not wishing to be a child again, but resolved to be a man, to live a man's life, cherish a man's thoughts and find in

each passing hour a man's pleasures,—that kind of pleasure the remembrance of which will bring no regret when I stand on the farther shore and look back.

To do all that, one must lay the foundation of character in those principles which we call religious, because religion unites time to eternity, and teaches us to make an honorable, a high-minded, the best possible use of all the changeful experiences of life. If you think religion is intended to deprive you of any real pleasure or to shroud your weeks and months in gloom, you are seriously mistaken. Its only object is to make you satisfied with yourself and to make the angels satisfied with you. There is no sorrow in religion, for it lightens every burden and hides a hope under every tear.

Give a child a sand dune to play on and he asks no more ; give a man a pile of gold and, alas, he thinks he is supremely happy. But he is still in swaddling clothes and has only a wooden spade and a tin pail to play with. It is not your money, but your ideas, which make the home of your soul. In the last analysis of life you discover, to your surprise, that there is more enjoyment in giving than

in grasping. The heart of a man, not his purse, is his sovereign.

To spend an anxious life in trying to make your golden dream come true ; to thrust aside the simple pleasures which ought to make every day enjoyable in your hot eagerness to add to what is already enough ; to create and cultivate the appetite which hungers for more, is to waste precious time and to lose all chance of genuine happiness. The wrong we have done ourselves is in having made money rather than character the standard of excellence. Seek for gold if you will, but in the name of good government, of wholesome society, and of the best interests of mankind, put virtue, honesty, national and individual honor in the first rank. Having done that, you may in all other respects do as you please. Nothing can go wrong if you begin with what is right and insist upon it. Start with a lofty manhood, preserve that manhood intact against all temptations, and it makes no difference in what direction you travel, or what church creed you may adopt, you are on the road to heaven and will reach your destination at last.

Put it down in your note-book that no one can

reap the highest benefits of life, no one can enjoy what God decrees for daily experience, no one can be happy in any but the narrowest sense, no one can bravely meet the adversities which are sure to come, or die with a smile on his lips and leave a sweet and precious memory behind, unless he is governed by moral principle as the vessel is guided by the compass, and unless his honor, his integrity, has been guarded as his most precious possession. There is nothing in this wide world worth quite so much as the consciousness that you have done what is right in spite of fate, and nothing which so fully repays a man for all the sacrifices which are necessary in order to keep it.

The words of Christ in respect to this matter are as refreshing as a cool northwest wind on a hot day and as bracing and invigorating as a frosty morning in December. Christianity is another word for manliness. The true Christian uses this life as the carpenter uses his chest of tools, to build something which time cannot destroy and which eternity will strengthen.

A GREEN OLD AGE

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.—St. Luke ii., 29.

I LIKE to go into an old house, wander through its halls and chambers, and remind myself of the customs and habits of a generation that has slipped into the past. Such a house is quaint in its architecture and its decorations. It is not quite a part of our time, but it is perhaps all the more interesting on that account. The roof is covered with moss, the walls with ivy, and there is about it a prophecy of dissolution not to be much longer postponed ; but I like it, and it has a peculiar charm for me. I think of those who have been sheltered there from the same storms which have swept through human lives ever since creation's dawn, who wept the same kind of tears that have fallen from our eyes and laughed with the merriment which makes

us laugh. Houses are different in different ages, but souls are alike in all ages.

And I like also, and for the same reason, to sit by the side of man or woman who has travelled through the experiences of many years and is now nearing the journey's end. He looks back through a vista of eighty years or more, and forward to an eternal future which is close at hand. His body shows signs of weakness, but his soul has just begun to recognize its possibilities. He reminds me of a vigorous youth standing in the doorway of a tottering mansion. Indeed, I am of the opinion that a soul grows young as the body grows old; that there is no such thing as age to the immortal part of us. The muscles and nerves become weary and need the rest which change, the change of death, brings, but the spirit just crosses the threshold of conscious and healthy life when signs of physical decay make their appearance. We may note that the machine works with hesitation, or perhaps refuses to work at all, but at that moment the man in the old house knows that he is better fitted to do good work than when he stood years ago at the entrance to his earthly career. Give him a new

body and he will show you that his sojourn or bivouac here has been only an apprenticeship, and that when death gives him his freedom and another world furnishes him with his opportunity he will be a nobler creature than his present circumstances have allowed him to become.

I reverence old age ; I mean the right sort of old age. If one can grow old gracefully, can ripen like an apple which is ruddy with sunshine and dew and at last drops into the basket of the fruit gatherer, then I think the sunset of life is more beautiful than its sunrise. Of course there is a peculiar delight in youth, with its many tasks in front of it, but mellow and sweet-tempered age, its stint all done, ready to go when the summons comes, has a charm of its own, a richness as of the autumn forests, a sanctity like that of a cathedral, and the dignity of a lofty pine which totters in the gale.

But one may be soured by age, and that is a great misfortune. To fret because we cannot do what was so easily done in days gone by, to chafe because our will is no longer the law of the household, to rebel because the new generation has a way of its own, new customs and habits, to which we are

strangers, and to constantly find fault because we must sit in the background while our children, grown to men and women, occupy the foreground—to do these things is to sadly err, to make the last days of our journey more difficult than they need be and to overtax the love that does so much and makes so many sacrifices for our contentment and happiness.

It is a duty to grow old with as much sweetness as can be gathered from the fact that heaven is close at hand. After a certain age this world has practically done with us, for others have taken our places. There is much for us to do, but it is not the same kind of work that we did years ago. Our rich experience can bless many a life, and if our age is "serene and bright and lovely as a Lapland night" we shall be a saintly presence in the household, honored, revered, and beloved.

In order to accomplish this our thoughts must grow purer, our tempers gentler, our charity larger, and, above all, our faith stronger with the passage of time. He who sees no to-morrow will be wretched when the sun declines. To sit in the armchair in the corner and be glad that the little

ones are happy; to be happy with them; to be willing to live within the narrower circle which increasing infirmity prescribes, but to smile on those who enjoy what we have enjoyed so long,—all this is the peculiarity of a heavenly old age, which draws to it the respect and reverence of the new generation.

God's way is the best after all. Youth is elastic, middle life is titanic, but when you have reached the middle of the afternoon, and from that hour on until the shadows slowly fall, the soul must admit that its house is out of repair and be content with those serene experiences which are like a calm after the stormy period of life's activities.

I used to dread to grow old, but now I prize age more highly than any other season of the year. There may be lines in the face, but they are like the furrows in a ploughed field. They tell where the harrow has been and where the crops have flourished. The physical vigor subsides, but the man himself is stronger than ever, handicapped, like a chained athlete, but still strong and hopeful, and even youthful.

Never grow old in heart. Be yours the kind of religion which makes you sweeter in soul as the

months slip by. The passage of time must not touch your temper, except to make you gentler and more kindly. Years add to the value of wine by making it richer, and they should do the same for you. You have had your day. Be thankful for that, and above, all live in a frame of mind so contented, so peaceful, so sympathetic, that your love goes out to every one. Before you, not far distant, are the shores of the other world. You can hear the music of the waves as they break on the strand. In the meantime open the soul's doors that angels may enter, and be ready and glad to go when the summons comes. Heaven grows dearer and clearer as this life fades into a dream, for it is a dream, and the other life is the only reality.

THE BETHLEHEM OF THE SOUL

Where is he that is born King of the Jews?—St. Matthew ii., 2.

THE Bethlehem of Judea is a village which occupies a very exalted position in the history of religion. It is the starting-point in a journey from the worn-out old to the refreshing and invigorating new.

Neither prophet nor seer standing by the manger on that eventful night could have foretold the consequences to the world of that Child's advent. The pilgrims in that little caravansary heard with indifference that a newcomer had appeared on the scene, and shrugged their shoulders at the vague rumors of supernatural events which reached them like a distant echo, but neither they nor any one else this side of heaven had any conception that a new page in the book of life had been turned and that mankind stood face to face with a future too transcendent for the most vivid imagination to depict.

A Babe on its mother's bosom! A pallet of straw, a flickering lantern, the braying of asses and the neighing of horses! Men and women, fellow travellers, gossiping about a curious story told by shepherds who had bivouacked in the neighborhood! A dim belief on the part of some that the incident had great possibilities which might or might not be favorable to their own fortunes, and a grave doubt on the part of others, who had been led astray so often by predictions that they had become overcautious! These were the incidents of the occasion, and they remind one of an orchestra tuning their instruments before playing the symphony to which the whole world listens in breathless wonder.

The religions of mankind had completed their ordained task. They had become spent bullets which no longer reached the target. In their day they had done faithful service, but their day had lapsed into evening, and they had fallen into disuse. The human heart craved a kind of food which they could no longer supply. Their resources were exhausted, the water pitcher was empty and there was apparently no fountain at which it could be refilled. Shall the man who has outgrown the clothes of

childhood go naked when he has cast them aside, or are there other looms in which more suitable fabrics can be made, and shall he be reclothed in garments which fit his larger stature? These questions were being asked by the thoughtful and observing in every part of the civilized globe. No one knew it at the time; scarcely any one would have believed it if he had been told, but that manger in Bethlehem was God's answer to this questioning. That manger was the slender source of a lordly religion which has flowed through the ages, bearing on its broad bosom the hearts and the hopes of the human race, an ever-widening current flowing toward eternity.

But there is another Bethlehem besides that of Judea,—the Bethlehem of the soul. I have a Bethlehem within, and you have another, and every child of earth another. The old has ceased to satisfy us; we long for a new revelation, for higher purposes, loftier aspirations. The dry husks of creed, of dogma, of conventional belief, have no nourishment for our spiritual bodies. We strain our ears to hear that overture of angels which will announce a golden age of faith. We know that God is not far off, but what hides Him from our view? The

Christ could see the heavenly hosts and call upon them as friend calls on friend in time of trouble, but our eyes are dim. We almost see and almost hear, but between us and them there are curtains which we try in vain to part. Hands are outstretched, but they are invisible. Love looks down on our homes and leads us in mysterious ways, but we are dull and more than half doubtful of it all. There are witnesses in the cloud, but though we see the cloud the witnesses we cannot hear. Why is this? What can we do to stand where He stood and see the heavens as clearly as we see the earth?

The Christ must be born in the Bethlehem of the soul, and then all will be changed. Too much of this world, too little of the other and better world—that is our trouble, our spiritual disease. We say that the body has a soul in it and so proclaim that we feel sure of this body, but not quite sure of the soul. If we could take the higher position and declare that we are souls with bodies wrapped about them as a temporary convenience, just as one puts on his overcoat on a chilly day and takes it off when warmer weather comes, then we should put that

first which God meant to be first and put second the overcoat, which only keeps us warm for a time and is then laid aside. It is our love for the overcoat which stands in the way of progress. Thus we prize what is worthless and disregard what is priceless.

It is a mistake to think that Christ's work was finished when He went to heaven. On the contrary, it was just begun. "I will be with you alway" were not words lightly spoken, but their full import is seldom understood. The Christ of Jerusalem is the Christ of to-day. He is on the earth now just as much as we are. The angels who ministered to Him then are ministering to us at the present moment. His power is our power if we are in the right relation to Him, and what He did, yes, "greater things than these shall ye do" when He and we are on terms of divine intimacy. Burdens may be heavy, but nevertheless they will be light; sorrows may be hard to bear and yet they will be easy to bear; death may be dreaded and yet it will be gladly welcomed; bereavement may be heart-breaking and yet our hearts will not be broken —these are the paradoxes of a true religion.

Christ in the soul, loved as the bride is loved by the bridegroom! Dear ones waiting on the earthward shore of eternity to greet us at our coming! Beautiful life, calm, serene death, and then "there shall be no night there." That is to be the religion of the future; why not make it the religion of to-day?

FRUIT

Ye shall know them by their fruits.—St. Matthew vii., 16.

IF we wish to get at the man who hides inside of the man and find whether he is well-tempered steel or only poor iron, we must listen to his actions rather than his speech.

Talking is a good deal easier than doing, and one naturally paints a fair picture when describing himself. But if you look at the cold facts of a man's daily life you see at a glance whether he is saint or sinner, for deeds have a habit of telling the truth without favoritism.

If we could be saved by what we believe, or what we profess to believe, we should forge our way into heaven without any great difficulty. But that is not the law. We must work our way there or not get to heaven at all. In a word, we must earn heaven before we can enjoy it. No one can make

us a present of it. We must win it by deserving it. My creed will not buy it, but my life will. We must take to the Lord the deeds we have been doing during these years of temptation, and they will decide our future as they are now deciding our present. You can't get something for nothing in the spiritual any more than in the physical world.

And it is unsafe to depend on what is called death-bed repentance, which is well enough in its way, because it is better than no repentance at all, but a very poor substitute for an honest life. I do not believe you can have God's approval by simply saying you are sorry for what you have done when the time comes that you can have your own way no longer. It is wiser to look at things in the strong light of common sense and refuse to do wrong rather than do it and then see that you have made a mistake.

What I call religion, therefore, is rather a serious thing. You cannot do as you please in any such world as this. There is a law which will not be blinked out of sight. Neither can it be bribed to look on you more favorably than on others. Build on sand, and the house falls ; build on a rock, and

it stands. A child once asked me if two and two always make four. I answered: "Yes, my son, and if you never forget that fact you will be saved many a regret."

Religion must not be mistaken for a frothy sentimentalism which operates in some magical way to swing the pearly gates wide open. On the contrary, it is sturdy, muscular, and athletic, giving you in the autumn the result of your labor in the spring and summer. Its purpose is to so educate and develop your soul that you will be happy and contented in whatever planet you find yourself, because you have earned the right to be contented and happy.

Religion is not primarily an emotion, but rather a thought, a conviction, a faith. It is like a bridge which is new to you. You try it doubtfully at first, not knowing whether it will bear your weight or not. But the farther you go the more you trust it, and at last you feel sure that it will conduct you to the other shore. There are many things in religion which we do not understand, some which puzzle us very greatly. But the things we see clearly lead us to have confidence even when we cannot see at all.

I do not understand the mariner's compass, but experience teaches me to put implicit faith in it even in the storm and tempest.

But some one will remind me that men and women have led the purest lives and still repudiated Christianity. I know of a marble quarry which would be very valuable were it not for the iron rust which has percolated through it. Nevertheless I have seen several large blocks of marble from that quarry which were as white as December snow. The quarry, however, will not pay for the working.

Christianity is a series of the highest possible thoughts, and we have learned that noble thoughts make noble lives. The thought of God, of immortality, of duty, of obedience to law, are creative thoughts. They cannot enter your guest chamber without making the whole household radiant. The sun shines in every life where these thoughts dwell. The natural fruitage of faith in them is a harvest rich in good grain, and, on the other hand, the natural fruitage of doubt is discontent. The farmer who prefers poor seed to good is not wise, and why should he choose the lesser good rather than the greater?

Religion brings peace, resignation, happiness. Therefore we want it. The Master leads in the smoothest road from earth to heaven. Therefore we follow Him. If religion gives us the grace to live and the grace to die, comfortable in the thought of eternity and reunion, then we call for it, as we call for food when we are hungry.

HEROES AND HEROINES

But he that endureth to the end shall be saved.—St. Matthew x., 22.

EVERYBODY admires heroism. The qualities of character which hurl one to the forefront in a critical moment, careless of danger, reckless of consequences, claim our unstinted applause.

But in the emergency, when the air vibrates with excitement, a man becomes intoxicated with courage, ordinary soldiers do deeds which would grace a god of Olympus, and the coward is so rare an exception that he becomes invisible. Human nature, when impelled by a strong passion or a noble ambition, surprises itself. The poor village lout has a capacity for endurance and brilliant work which needs only time and incentive to become divine. The rattle of musketry is the stimulus to great achievement. The perilous expedition, with

sudden death lurking in ambush, will always find volunteers.

Man is a rude, crude, but grand sort of creature, with the making of an archangel in him. There is a mettle in his soul which has not yet been fully called forth. He is a Toledo blade which the hot fire of circumstance will some time temper. He is nobler than he knows or ever can know until he is forced to show himself by opportunity.

So much for physical heroism. It is generally exhibited in the gaze of the world. There is another kind, however, and a higher kind, which never sees the light of day—the quiet heroism of an obscure life. The majority of our heroes and heroines will be unknown to us until we get to heaven. They are not now walking on hilltops, where they can be observed of all men, but are living quietly and sacrificing patiently in their narrow sphere, waiting for the peace and rest which will come "at eventide." I have known many such, and have never looked into their sad faces without thinking that there is a courage to which that of the battle-field is a trivial circumstance, the courage which endures with resignation and meets inevitable suffering

and misfortune with a calmness which is God's best gift.

Here, for example, is a woman who on her wedding day saw nothing but blue sky and sunshine. It seemed as though no shadow could throw itself across her path. A light heart and lips of laughter — nothing more. She did not know her own strength, for she had never been tested. But the avalanche swept down the mountain side and crushed and buried all her hopes. The day was turned to night, and even the stars refused to come out. Sickness, death, poverty followed in logical succession. She was face to face with a hard world, her children crying for bread. The friends of other days had their attention called elsewhere, and they saw her not. Alone in the struggle ! And yet she bravely set to work, won her way to a livelihood, walked her lonely path in calm confidence that God still lived, brushed away the tears and grappled with fate. The struggle has told on her, for her hair is gray, and there is a look in her face which comes only from sorrow hard to bear.

You do not know her, or perhaps care to know her, but that life is one long list of heroisms, and

when we all get yonder and look back on the past we shall see the path she has travelled, the upward climb of her years, and give her the meed of praise which a thoughtless and ignorant world now refuses. There are no nobler qualities of character than her uncomplaining endurance, her persistent patience and her undimmed faith. The future has crowns for such souls, and God and the angels walk with them on their way to the New Jerusalem.

I know a man who has given his life to an aged parent, and another who has been bedridden for years, shut in from the pleasures which we most prize, and still another whose life has been a long sacrifice for his children, and another who — but why continue the list? I do but remind you of a similar instance within your own knowledge.

To meet such a fate requires the sublimest courage, not the courage of despair, but the courage of faith. There are flowers even in such byways as these, joys which cheer the heart and spots of happiness like oases in the desert. It is strange, but the presence of God and the conscious companionship of angels can bring bright days and starry nights. It is not our surroundings, after all, that

bring peace, for if peace is in the heart it throws its light over all.

The root and foundation of this heroism is religion. There must be faith that above us and around us are helpful and cheering influences, that earth and heaven are within telepathic distance of each other, and that what strength we need will be given us for the asking if we are to meet sorrow and misfortune with quiet fortitude. And the more we realize the presence of God the easier it is to bear burdens. If we could once catch a glimpse of an angel's face — and some tell me they have done this —we should be light-hearted even in the dark. At any rate, we can have faith that loved ones are near though invisible, and it helps us as nothing else can.

A NEW YEAR

A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.—Psalm xc., 4.

TIME and eternity! The one is the beautiful porch to the great temple, the other is the magnificent temple itself, whose spaces are immeasurable even by the imagination.

In very truth we begin the eternal life with the first breath we draw in childhood. As a matter of convenience, however, we cut off a small section of eternity, just long enough to encompass our earthly life, and call it time. Dividing it into years and months and days, we are able to keep our varied experiences in mind, telling ourselves that at such a moment we suffered defeat, at such another we won the victory, and at still another some dear one came into the household to add its little voice to the domestic chorus, or perhaps some dear one suddenly

became silent and left us to wonder in what clime she is now wandering.

It is a beautiful and profitable custom, this which we celebrate as the cold sun shines on each successive first of January. There are seventy hillocks in the short journey of human life, and as we reach each one in turn we lay our burdens down for a short respite, gather our friends together, recall the past, forecast the future, and with kindly greetings wish each other a happy arrival at the next hillock, then take up our burdens once again and enter the valley that lies between the two elevations. It is a day of good cheer, of fraternal assembly. The air is full of happy thoughts and good wishes. The whole world is brighter for it, for heart goes out to heart, and universal sympathy lifts us for a time to a higher level. Earth is a little more comforting and heaven a little dearer.

Some new faces have come and some of the old faces have disappeared, but love welcomes the one and faith still catches an occasional glimpse of the other. It is the day when we stop for a moment to listen to the keynote of a better life. Dissatisfied with what we have done, the soul bids us be braver,

truer, and nobler. We heed the warning, and though the cares of the coming days may diminish the force of our resolution, a subtle something remains which points to possibilities unattained, while it reminds us of the ability to attain them. With the capacity to be great, we are still strangely small of soul, and on each New Year's Day we chide ourselves for our weakness. A sense of shame mingles with the consciousness of power, and we annually promise ourselves better things.

Amid the hilarities of the hour there come to us serious thoughts. Laughter, amusement, pleasure have a conspicuous place in the religious life. Be sad when you must, but be glad whenever you can. The sadness will come of itself, unbidden, but the gladness must be sought, and it is a duty to search for it until it is found. But behind the smiles, the frivolities, the gayeties, every reasoning soul finds food for grave questioning.

To the youth come moments when the vision of great possibilities visits him. Life is stern, grave, laborious. He dreams of success and stirs his inner depths with the determination to make it his. But what shall the success be? Wealth, fame, position?

These are well enough and quite worthy our utmost effort. Still, if we have only wealth or fame or position, yea, if we have all three in our grasp, they are not enough. Without manliness, honesty, self-respect, the ability to look back on the path we have travelled without a sigh, they count as nothing when the soul criticises and measures itself. A life of moral principle, of honor, of even-handed justice, is the only life worth living. Therefore, with all your striving, let nobility of heart, an unblemished career, be your guiding star.

To the man in middle life the question asks itself on such a day as this, What have I done to make the world better for my living in it? Peasant or merchant, learned or illiterate, that question must be answered, and the answer comes with an armful of joy or of regret. One can make his character great and noble in whatever station he may be placed, and character is the only thing that lasts. Death cannot change it, for it walks through the valley of shadows to the throne of God, to be accepted there. On this bright morning, if we can congratulate our own souls on what they have achieved we have a new year blessing that comes straight from heaven.

To the aged there is nothing left but the future. The past has gone beyond recall and to-morrow beckons. In the sweet faith that the sun will rise again and that we shall rise with it the winter points to spring. There is no sadness though the journey draws to a close, for the Beyond opens up its glories and with a single step we shall be with our loved ones once more. If we have done our work well we shall go hence with joy.

For the young, therefore, and for the aged, and for all, there is but one wish—that the new year will find us strong for its duties and ready to reap the harvest in the field in which Providence has placed us.

IN THE OTHER LIFE

In my Father's house are many mansions.—St. John xiv., 2.

WHAT pursuits and pleasures will occupy our attention in the next life? This is a question which not only excites our curiosity but seriously demands an answer. Since every day brings us nearer to the great mystery of death, we naturally inquire concerning the conditions on which we shall enter after we leave the valley of shadows and emerge into a world about which only the faintest hints have been vouchsafed.

We are not, however, left entirely in the dark on this subject. The little we know leads to many a reasonable surmise, for since there is a certain fixed consistency in the realm of spirit as well as of matter, it is safe to build a future out of the capacities and longings of human nature.

The scientific imagination predicts with consider-

able assurance the kind of physical life which exists on the planets of our system, and its statements are received with undoubting confidence. In like manner the student of the soul may venture without much hesitation to declare that a given environment must result from our passage into the immortal life. It would be folly to insist on details, but general principles may be surely depended on.

The fact that the drudgery of our earthly career will be dispensed with, and that the soul will be free to follow its unhampered inclination, is itself a prophecy of what will happen. In this under world physical necessities press upon us like a heavy burden, while the spirit of man very rarely has full scope. The body is always in evidence, but the soul is in the shadowed background. Manual work in order to maintain existence, daily struggle to supply our material wants, is the tragic element of this lower life. We have neither time nor ability to provide food for the soul, because so much time and energy are required to provide food for the body. Millions of men are hardly conscious of their immortality because from cradle to grave they spend their best selves in keeping a roof over their heads and

earning bread for their children. The years pass, and when the end comes the spiritual nature is still undeveloped. This is one of the puzzles which confront us when we try to understand the providence of God.

But with death we leave this burden at the churchyard gate. No more anxiety about the body! It has done its work and is reverently laid aside. When clothed upon with a spiritual body physical drudgery ceases and pure soul comes to the forefront. We may declare, therefore, that the next life will furnish us with intellectual opportunities which have heretofore been denied. Mind and heart, aspiration and affection, not only the nobler man, but the real man, will be free, and the watchword of immortality will be growth. The radiance of infinite wisdom and love will beckon us toward the ideal, the universe will be our schoolroom and God Himself our teacher. We shall begin then with a condition which is now almost inconceivable, but which will be unutterably blessed. Under such influences there must needs be an awakening of dormant powers, and the dimmed and blurred souls of earth will have an eternity in which to become archangels.

I believe that every one has the breath of God in his nostrils. That breath constitutes personality—a personality which will persist forever. It will not be absorbed in the infinite as a drop of water is absorbed by the ocean, but will maintain its separate identity throughout eternity. Moreover, it will, amid the opportunities of another life, slowly educate itself and rise to heights not dreamed of. No part of God can die, neither can it remain dormant. It will, when it becomes conscious of itself, push its way into broader spheres of influence and development, coming nearer to the Father in the passing cycles of eternity, until at last the morning stars will once more sing together over a redeemed world—a world awakened to its true destiny and engaged in the glorious work of accomplishing it.

Such thoughts fill the dark landscape of the present with glorious light. We belong to Christ and boundless love shelters us with its protecting wings. A faith like that uplifts our struggling and despondent souls, for when we have borne our burdens bravely, death will give us the relief we pray for and eternity will welcome us to a larger life. We must, therefore, be cheerful, patient, and courageous, nor

let the ills of the present unfit us for the blessings of the future. God is our Father, and we should get nearer to Him with every trial and sorrow. We shall not really live until we live again.

A GLAD HEART

Rejoice evermore. In everything give thanks.—1 Thessalonians v., 16, 18.

I HAVE an artist friend who a few days ago fell into that sleep which we call death. He is my friend still, though we are separated, I in one world, and he in another, for he was steadfast in his affections and could not easily change. He went to the opera in the afternoon, for he was sensitive to music, and on his return home, during a sweet slumber, his soul wandered away from the body and, seeing so much that was beautiful on the other side of the river, forgot to return.

He had one characteristic which I admired beyond expression—namely, he was an apostle of good cheer in art. He delighted in an orchard of apple blossoms and painted them with such cunning skill that you could almost catch their fragrance and almost

feel the spring breeze fan your cheek. He never looked on the dark side of nature, would not use his colors on a tempest, and so one loves to look at his pictures, for they are uplifting, and there is a smile in every one of them.

It seems to me to be a duty to always look on and to look for the bright side of things, as my artist did. Life is a different matter to him who looks out from the shadow in his heart from what it ought to be. It is easy to exaggerate an evil or a misfortune, and the imagination can brood over a sorrow no bigger than a dime until it covers the whole earth. To magnify our joys and to minimize our sorrows is one of the secrets of human happiness. If you place a penny on the eye you can see nothing but blackness, but if you hold it at arm's length it grows so small in the general brightness that it almost vanishes. To cherish a grief or disappointment and brood over it, as I have known men and women to do, is to give it proportions to which it has no rightful claim. It grows by your encouragement until it is the only thing in sight, and, like a despot, rules you with an iron will. It may be only a dwarf, but you make it a giant. In doing this you not only take a false

view of life, but you render yourself incapable of making a strenuous effort, tying your own hands with an imaginary cord.

The facts are all opposed to the chronic fault-finder. Nature has her rough and terrible moods, but on the whole she is beneficent. The general trend is to produce happiness, and in most cases the misery from which we suffer is caused by some wilful or ignorant infraction of law. There are more bright than gloomy days in the year, more smiles than tears in every one's life. We take the good as a matter of course and straightway forget it; we linger over the painful moments and cherish their memory. A sturdy effort to make a good use of a hard experience would rub away its cutting edges, but we bivouac in pleasant things and keep a permanent home in the unpleasant.

This habit of mind cannot be called religious, not by any stretch of the imagination. It is much nearer to atheism, for it engenders the sort of emotion, close to desperation and despair, which belongs to pure unbelief. Religion, indeed, is the science of good cheer. That is its mission in the world. It is not an unpalatable dose of medicine to make you die

comfortably, but a glorious hope that will make you live comfortably. It tells you how to get out of sorrow all the compensation it contains, how to bear a burden with equable temper and how to die with the consciousness that when at last you fall asleep some one will wake you to a higher and better life.

If your religion fails to do that for you it is certainly adulterated. You must throw the old thoughts aside and find better ones to guide you through the maze of coming years. You cannot always be hilarious, for sometimes you must weep, but you can always be calm and trustful, and if you are both of these you will be as cheerful as the circumstances admit. Good thoughts, high thoughts, bring hope, and hope is sunshine.

PATIENT ENDURANCE

But let patience have her perfect work.—St. James i., 4.

PATIENCE is generally classed among the minor virtues, but so much of life's happiness and usefulness depend on it that we ought to give it a more prominent place. To patiently endure an environment which includes suffering and hardship is nothing less than heroism, and there are unseen and unrecorded instances in which men and women have even shown the courage of the martyr.

Patience is always yoked with other high qualities of character. Its nearest ally is self-control, and self-control is as important when you are building a character as a rudder is when a ship is launched. It is literally the steering apparatus which keeps us clear of the rocks and shoals of an impetuous and reckless temper. I would rather have patience with perfect self-control than to have genius, for while

genius is erratic and often unbalanced, these other qualities give us poise and equilibrium. Patience is grounded on resignation to the inevitable, which results in a calm endurance under exasperating circumstances, and in the conviction that it is safer to bear the ills we have than to fly to others that we know not of. When a man cultivates patience, therefore, he becomes master of himself and master of whatever may possibly happen. It is a kingly, a royal virtue, and more depends on its possession than we are apt to think.

You can reckon its value by considering its opposite. Impatience is a dangerous quality. It constantly places your self-respect and your relations to your dearest friends in peril. Moreover, it makes unhappy circumstances more unhappy still. You can't rebel against your surroundings with a complaining heart without rendering yourself weak to oppose or change them. Look your life over calmly and impartially and you will find that where you have been at odds with your lot you have made that lot so much the worse and more difficult to get away from, whereas, if you had accepted the bitter experience and made the best of it, you would have reaped

a benefit otherwise impossible. It is equally true that where you have been impetuous of speech you have had cause for regret, while a curbed tongue has been cause for rejoicing. When you have been silent you have done better than when you have spoken. A bitter word suppressed strengthens the character, while a reckless utterance is like a bomb, which is sure to injure if it does not kill a friendship.

It is an inexorable law that three quarters of the world must drudge in order to live. You may wonder why this should be so, but you will find no solution of the puzzle. The simple, stubborn fact faces you, and it ends all controversy. Moreover, all the world, without exception, must sooner or later bear heavy burdens of sorrow and bereavement. The normal condition of man is to be a burden bearer, and I had almost said it is the only healthy condition. There is no smooth road laid down on the chart of life. We all trudge through storm and sunshine. Poverty, sickness, trouble, death, are to be found everywhere. Kings and peasants alike have their sorrows. It is the common lot.

There is only one question to be asked and answered: How shall we make these experiences

contribute to strength of character, and possibly to our welfare? Not, surely, by a restless controversy with the inevitable and the inexorable. That state of mind only aggravates the evil, without even the shadow of a good result. It is your attitude of mind and heart which decides your happiness or misery.

Fight fate and you will surely be defeated; not only defeated, but soured. On the other hand, make the best of the worst, calmly and patiently use events and extract from them whatever of good they may contain, and your days will swing along with a smoothness that will surprise you. More and better than that, your calmness and patience will have a tendency to draw to you the help of the other world, and if you and the other world come to a harmonious understanding the very complexion of your adverse circumstances will change.

In a word, the soul which follows in the footsteps of the Christ, and in poverty and hard work and misfortune bravely meets and nobly endures, will find light in unexpected places and joys where only fears were looked for. There is a subtle law here, and if we can discover it and be guided by it the

clouds will have a silver lining and even our sorrows will prove a blessing.

God is still with us, and so are the angels of God. With patience and courage we may fit ourselves for their kind services, and so make good use of the roughest places over which we must travel to the rest and reward of the glorious future.

WEEDS AND FLOWERS

Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.—1 Corinthians xvi., 13.

I HAVE a neighbor in the country who has a garden which he treats in a very peculiar way. His theory is that all forces of nature are good natured, and that all products of nature should be encouraged. Whatever is natural, he tells me, is admirable. A weed is just as natural as a rose and has just as clear a right to flourish. It is, therefore, unfair to discriminate against the weed by pulling it up and destroying its life.

Wishing to see how his theory worked in practice, I wandered about his enclosure and found a curious state of affairs. The weeds were in a more flourishing condition than the roses; in fact, they had taken possession of the ground and dominated it to such an extent that the flowers had well-nigh given up the struggle for existence and were on the verge of

despair. I vainly tried to convince my neighbor that if he wanted flowers he must pull up the weeds, for the two do not get on well together. They can't be made to harmonize, because weeds are greedy and refuse to give flowers a fair chance.

My neighbor has another peculiarity. He carries his theory into the education of his boy. All natural impulses are good impulses, he tells me, and it is not right to give a child a bias toward this or that standard. Let him show himself just as he is, giving perfectly free vent to his good and bad qualities of character, and by and by he will achieve a well-rounded and well-balanced soul. It is the weed theory transferred to human nature, and so far as my observation of the boy goes it works very badly. I rather fear that later on that father's heart will be filled with regrets.

You cannot build a house without a plan. If you attempt to do so you will have a curious combination whose inconvenience is only equalled by its ugliness. A house without a plan is not worth living in, and a character without a plan is not worth having. It is not true that all natural impulses are good, for some impulses, when gratified, produce unmixed

evil. Not everything that is is right, for some things are wholly wrong and must be held in check at any cost. If you give the weeds as fair a chance as the flowers the time will come when the flowers will die and nothing but the weeds will be left. It is just as necessary to pull up certain natural qualities as to pull up weeds, and unless you do so you will find yourself without any character at all.

There is a stern and awful truth in the injunction to pluck your eye out if it offends you. It is a bold figure and startling, but it has a profound meaning. If, for instance, you give free rein to your selfishness, it will grow apace to rule and ruin. It will creep over your soul like a smouldering fire on the prairie and burn the life out of everything good as it goes. You must treat it as you would a weed, and without any compunction tear it up and hurl it as far from you as possible. And if you have a quick or an ill temper it is necessary to subdue it if you would have peace or happiness. Your very nature must be conquered, no matter how hard the fight may be. It must be caught, harnessed, bitted, tamed, and taught that you are its master and will be obeyed.

You are simply a bundle of possibilities in the be-

ginning, and if you allow them full swing you will become a mass of contradictions. Your business as an immortal soul is to look all your tendencies, good and bad, squarely in the face and then set to work to annihilate some of them, to encourage others, and, with a definite purpose in view, to give yourself the shape of honest and virile manhood. This is not an easy, but it is a glorious task, and it ends in the victory over self, the sublime mastery which brings self-respect and that dignity which comes with poise and conscience.

The object of religion is to teach you that this is the best and noblest thing to do, and that it is the only thing which it will pay you to do. That struggle is worth your while, for when you find yourself well in hand you will possess that quiet kind of power which blesses you and the whole world alike. This life gives you that sort of discipline, and when the lesson is learned you will be ready for any other life that may come to you. Earth will become a stepping-stone to heaven, for a whole man is fitted for any world in God's universe. Plant your garden with flowers, and then see that weeds do not interfere with their growth.

TRUE RICHES

For all things are yours ; whether . . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours.—1 Corinthians iii., 21, 22.

IF we were to spend more time trying to be grateful for the blessings we enjoy, and less time in grumbling because we lack some things which we have longed for, we should make our lives more agreeable to ourselves and more profitable to others.

Discontent is a kind of poison which produces general debility of the chronic sort, and discontent is in many instances the child of envy. It is the drop of vinegar which sours the whole temper of the man, and instead of being a trusty Toledo blade which cuts its cheerful and hopeful way through opposing forces, he becomes a poor kind of sword which hides in the scabbard when danger demands daring.

To dwell on the things you do not possess, and to feel wronged because others do possess them, is to lose the battle before the bugle calls you to the front. On the other hand, to foster the ability God has given you, to be cheerful in narrow circumstances, but to determine to make them wider with favoring opportunity,—in other words, to fill your sphere full to overflowing with your best self—all this equips you for duty, and brings an ultimate victory within reach. A sour soul never yet accomplished much good for itself or for others. Eyes must be lifted toward the heavens, not dropped to the earth, if we are to make life comfortable or comforting.

We really possess many things which are not written in the inventory we have taken. St. Paul in the text gives us a new viewpoint, one which worldliness and selfishness sneer at, but which opens a long vista to the vision of the spirit. What care you if your neighbor has the title-deed to many acres? You own the beauty of the landscape in equal partnership with him. The firmament, fretted with passing clouds, is not his more than yours. You own the world, and its laws contribute to your welfare as though you were the only beneficiary of

their wealth. If your vision is clear you see that life also is yours, to make of it all that is possible, to cut the rude block of experience into a character which shall be beautiful and symmetrical, and to force it to give you the password to immortality. The God of the universe is yours as truly as though you were the only inhabitant of the planet, ready to answer your call, always present with a host of angelic hands to deliver you from the enemy and to lift you to a higher spiritual level. Death also is yours, not a foe but a friend, and when the weary day is done he leads you from the gathering shadows of sunset to the glorious sunrise which floods the eternal life. The eye of the body sees only the poorest possessions, while the eye of the soul sees riches too great to be computed, and these riches are yours beyond the reach of litigation. What are acres, though their only boundary is the horizon, in comparison with thoughts that uplift, aspirations which give you wings, and the faith which draws aside the curtain of the future and gives you a glimpse of what is hidden there? Palaces are not equal to ideas, for one may be miserable though knee-deep in gold, while he who has God in his

home has the magic which makes a hovel a happy home.

Let us look at life, which is no longer than a dream in the night, as contributory to the soul, not to the body, for a man is not a body with a soul in it, but a soul with a body wrapped round it. If you were to spend a short hour each day in quiet meditation of the blessings you enjoy, brushing aside all envy and selfishness; one short hour in getting a firm hold on yourself—your better, truer, nobler self—you would be transfigured and life would be enriched. We are not depraved; we are thoughtless. There is a divinity within us which is cramped, dwarfed, and unable to express itself. Give it freedom, let it act and speak, crown it with authority, and you will behold a miracle. Thrust aside the mean by thinking of yourself as the child of God with a destiny that stretches into the invisible eternity.

In that direction lies the only religion that can hold its own against the ills to which flesh is heir. That way also lie cheerfulness, contentment, peace, and happiness, possessions to be prized above all else that earth can offer. If you have God and

Christ and immortality, you are rich, but without them you are poor indeed, though wealth is your most humble servant.

A SIMPLE RELIGION

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.—St. James iv., 8.

ONE need not think very profoundly to find the necessity for a religion of some sort which will not only make this life tolerable, but also useful and hopeful.

He who lives without a definite purpose achieves no higher end than to serve as a warning to others. He is a kind of bell-buoy, mournfully tolled by the waves of circumstance, to mark the rocks or shoals which are to be avoided.

What the sun-glass does to the sun's rays,—converge them until they become a blazing and irresistible point,—that a definite purpose does to the energies of the soul. It brings them to a focus, and achievement follows as a matter of course.

The principle holds equally with purposes which

are either good or bad. Men who accomplish untold evil are focused men just as truly as the martyrs were who went to the stake for the truth's sake. It requires as much energy to do a colossal wrong as to do a colossal good. The villain and the saint are both men of perhaps equal resources, giants in their different ways.

There must therefore be something behind the mere fact of energy if life is to be all it can be, and that something is consecration. Religion furnishes the highest aim which souls can conceive, and plans a house for you to build in which you can live without regret, honored on earth and approved in heaven. Religion is consequently a necessity.

If I were to define religion I should say it is the science of ideal development, and its product is a character in which duty is the first thought, because the soul has been kindled by fire borrowed from the altar of God. The revelation of this religion in the New Testament is put in such simple and understandable terms that the world has mystified and misunderstood it. We have persistently declared that there must be an occult element in it which does not appear on the surface, and theologians have

mistaken their own surmises for the thoughts of Christ, and so put religion at such a distance from the common intelligence that it has lost its practical usefulness. The mission of the Christ was to fix a beacon light amid the shadows of the present and future, and to assure us that if we walk steadily in that direction we shall find peace and rest for to-day, and heaven for to-morrow. His religion consists of a conscious harmony between the soul and the soul's creator,— nothing more and nothing less.

Everything in the universe is religious by the sweet compulsion of God's will except man. He alone can be a wanderer. Stars and clouds, the trees of the forest, the flowers of the field, the seed which the farmer sows, and the sunshine and dew, whose magic bring the autumn crop, are all working with a purpose. They have a duty to fulfil, and they do it. All nature consists of a multitude of laws, which, like so many intelligent beings, are cheerfully doing the work which the Infinite Being gave into their charge. It is this fact which makes the world such a beautiful place to live in. The unseen violet is as happy in its obscurity as the bird which chirps in the branches above it. If we had

ears to hear we should discover that each particle of the universe is singing its note in the great gamut of universal life, and each little voice swells the general chorus of praise to Him who seeks the happiness of animate and inanimate through obedience to His will.

If man would be as happy as the rest of the world, he, too, must be obedient. Dishonesty and self-seeking are injurious because they are discords. Who seeks the welfare of others finds his own at the same time, and he who bestows reaps more than he has sowed. The secret is to give, not to get. The rose gives its perfume, the wheat-field multiplies itself, glad to fill the barn to the rooftree; the sun is prodigal of its heat and the stars of their light. Christ gave Himself, and God is always giving with a generous hand. Man alone grasps, clutches, tries to keep, and finds at last that he has lost what he most desired to gain. One may even sacrifice his life and thereby win riches beyond computation. Worship self and you grow poor; worship God and you lay up treasures. That is the law, and it stands on the statute-books of eternity, unrepealed and unrepealable. It is the mystery of Christ's teaching,

a revelation which the world has never yet read with appreciative mind and heart.

That kind of religion needs no creed except the creed of love. It is the philosophy of usefulness and happiness. You will never reach your full stature until you make it your own. It smooths the rugged path of life, it sheds light amid the shadows and dissipates all gloom. You may struggle, but in the struggle there is a heaven-born strength, until you wonder that you can bear and do so much. You may lie down to die, but gates open to your dim vision the memory of which leaves a smile on your lips when Death has finished his task.

God becomes a conscious element in your life, and the Christ becomes your companion. You and they walk together, through life, through death, to an eternity of work, of opportunity, of peace, and of love.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Can ye not discern the signs of the times?—St. Matthew xvi., 3.

THERE are those who seem to regard the age in which we live as wholly submerged in the sea of material things. I am convinced, however, that spiritual and religious concerns are regarded with equal earnestness.

We can hardly be blamed if we are fascinated by the world wherein we have set our tents for a short sojourn. Not only is our earthly life an exquisite delight which has been alluring in all centuries and to all races, but in addition to this the inventive genius of man has recently opened up such a whirl of novelties which increase our comfort and bring new possibilities within reach that we linger as long as we can and stretch the span of existence as much as we may.

This is not at all strange, neither is it a fact to be

deplored. While we remain we ought to enjoy our stay. The old legend that we are in a vale of tears is becoming misty, for the victories of science have given to this present time a kind of glamour, and the half-visible and half-achieved victories over the problems of the future make us wish ourselves younger that we might see what the coming century will bring. When the sun first creeps above the hilltops we long to witness the full blaze of its glory at midday.

But there is a deal of serious thought concerning the career of the soul when it can no longer remain in the body. I doubt if there has ever been an age when a solution of spiritual mysteries was more eagerly sought than now, or when mankind had a keener interest in everything pertaining to the next life. However glad we may be that we are here, and however anxious to remain as long as possible, we recognize the fact that the swift current is bearing us to eternity, and that fact urges us to discover all we can concerning the to-morrow that lies beyond to-day. The mental attitude of this generation is one of careful inquiry about the future, and every new suggestion is listened to with respectful atten-

tion. If we are absorbed in the things of earth there is also a profound underflow of belief, not merely of hope but of practical conviction that death is only a way station in the soul's journey, and I am bold to say that there is more faith in the essential principles of true religion than ever before.

Forms and ceremonies count for less and less. We have dug into the lower depths and found something better. It is not what we believe but what we are that makes or mars. Investigation has trimmed away many of the dead branches, but the trunk of the tree has the old-time vigor, and its roots run deeper into the soil of human motives and aspirations. Dogmas have dropped like overripe fruit, but the love of truth holds its own in the heart of man, and the new thought, like a new garment, not only fits us better than the old, but is more useful. The value of all the sterling qualities of character is emphasized, and we have questioned death so eagerly that we no longer dread what it can do. When we close the eyes of a dear one in sleep our grief is assuaged by the conviction that in some other clime and in some other environment our hands shall be clasped in reunion and we shall continue our work

under more favorable circumstances. Heaven is more real, more vivid, than it was to our fathers. They thought of it with an imagination, while our concept is practical. To them it was a strange place, a foreign territory, while to us it runs parallel with this life. Those who have gone have neither lost their affection for nor their interest in us. We are indebted to them for constant service, and bound to them by unbroken ties.

Thus are we ever walking toward the light, and rejoicing in it more and more. Thus is the human heart opening its spiritual windows, and we can now stand in the home and look downward to the broadening landscape and upward toward the stars. Thus also is a vital religion, one to live by and die by, revealing itself to us and creating each year a new surprise. Religion is not a creed, though it must needs have one; it is not a ritual, though that may be helpful. Religion is a motive, the dynamic force which drives us in the direction of larger and wider truth. Thus, moreover, after these many centuries of spiritual and intellectual groping, we are coming to understand the Christ for the first time. It is becoming plainer to us that love, stretching its hands

toward the infinite love, and then scattering love along the somewhat dull and burdened pathway of life, is the only thing worth a supreme effort, for it is the essence of all that we can hope for here and the promise of all we can pray for in the hereafter.

We should make the best of what we have and be happy in the thought of what the future will bring.

BURDEN-BEARING

In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.—St. John xvi., 33.

IT seems to be the law that no one shall be exempt from trials, discomforts, and tribulations. The tears of the poet are no less bitter than those of the peasant. The heart of wealth is quite as liable to break as the heart of poverty. Money loses its purchasing power when one asks for happiness. Sorrow makes the whole world one vast democracy, in which no one can claim exclusive rights.

The stern, hard fact is that our outward life seldom is what we would like to have it. It is a kind of kaleidoscope, and as every day gives it a turn a new and perhaps a wholly unexpected picture is presented. Life is like a year in the tropics—at one moment a blaze of sunshine and at another a shower of tears. No foresight can prevent, no skill can avoid, these changes.

The great question, therefore, which thrusts itself into the foreground is, How shall we use these changes to our spiritual advantage? That question answered, and answered correctly, we have solved the most solemn and the grandest problem that confronts the human race.

Sorrows may produce either of two results—one bad, the other good. They may put us out of harmony with the providence of God, incline us to deny His existence and attribute our misfortune to blind chance, thus embittering the soul and making it restless, uncomfortable, and at odds with everything and everybody. If fate rules the world—and fate is both blind and capricious, giving or withholding according to its whim or mood—there is no room on which to build either faith or resignation. Your attitude renders it impossible to get much good out of experience, because what comes depends on a throw of the dice. There is neither providence nor oversight anywhere, and you are in a state of rebellion against the powers which are in command of circumstances.

I have known men who have logically convinced themselves that they are neither part nor parcel of

any benign plan or purpose, who simply drift like a chip on the tide, and who have no recourse except to take what comes with as good a grace as they can. Such lives are hard to live, because doubt is a staff of willow which bends under their weight, while faith is a staff of oak on which they could safely lean for support.

Sorrows may also lead the mind to grave and rich conclusions; teach us that we are not masters in the universe ; that there is a controlling and mandatory intelligence which it is folly to resist, and that our safety, our serenity, our happiness, and our education lie in some close and confiding intimacy with that intelligence. This intimacy once established, like a friendship about which there is no suspicion, we have the essential elements of true religion. Life assumes a different aspect ; bitterness becomes impossible. The guide is always true, and can be trusted. You may go through miry places, but the guide goes with you and his words of encouragement sustain you. His object is not so much to make your journey pleasant as to make it profitable. You are working your way toward the future, and when you reach it you will see, what it is hard to

discover now, that your sorrows had their mission; that they contributed to your wholeness, and were necessary to your development.

Our theory is too often based on misinformation. To an immortal soul this life is an insignificant detail. It is important just as an infant school is important. The child is taught something—and that something is almost always irksome—which fits it for a higher realm of education. Life also is irksome, but if we take a large view of it we see that it is preparatory, prefatory—not the end of all things, but their feeble beginning. No man really lives until he dies. The other life will be infinitely better than this, as the man of full stature is more and better than the infant playing with toys.

Shut out the other world and there is literally nothing left. Not to live again is not to have lived at all. Destroy your hope, your aspiration, and think of yourself as a little creature smiling or weeping for an hour, and then fading into oblivion, and you shrivel and shrink into a dwarf.

The religion of the Christ comes to the rescue of our doubts and fears. The vision of immortality is like a beacon-light on a dark night. That religion

gives you so large and noble a prospect that you feel like a young giant who will some time get his growth. Religion, therefore, is health, strength, virile vigor, helping you to bear great burdens and to meet the strange vicissitudes which lie in ambush, as the brave Sir Knight does who fears nothing because he is larger than his enemies and is sure of the victory.

A thoughtful soul, conscious that it came from God and is destined to reach heaven, looking on duty as the source of peace, pushing aside the ills of life or bearing them with a serene and unchangeable faith, presents the most impressive picture which the whole universe affords.

BE OF GOOD CHEER

For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.—Romans vii., 15.

BY that confession St. Paul unwittingly endeared himself to all the generations of men. There is not only satisfaction but encouragement in the fact that a person as large as he had occasion to reproach himself for his shortcomings, just as we of smaller stature do. When the teacher who has enjoyed the privilege of special communion with the Most High admits that it is extremely difficult to always live on the level of his ideal we can take heart, because, though we lapse every now and again, there is no reason why we should not succeed in the end. The master of the violin may once in a while strike a false note, and still be master; so the pupil may only once in a while strike the true note and yet make good progress toward perfection.

The best is our rightful possession, but we must earn it. The religious life is one of the few things in this world which cannot be bought. The good father cannot leave it as an inheritance to his son. Lands and other riches can be left by will to whomsoever the testator chooses, but a noble character goes with the soul when it leaves the body, and if the heirs desire the same distinction they must work for it and deserve it. Nobility, honesty, self-control, kindliness, charity, are strictly personal possessions, and those who have them have fashioned them out of the raw material of human experience.

Our seventy years are simply a workshop supplied with whatever is necessary for the construction of a perfect character. God furnishes the model in the Christ, and Christ has left us the rules by which the ideal is to be attained. We make a thousand failures before it is possible to achieve success, but each failure is a milestone showing how far we have advanced.

The sculptor does not make a statue which gives him fame at the first trial. He wastes time and clay and marble, and frequently feels like surrendering in despair. But if ambition or genius keeps aflame he

forgets the things that are behind, presses forward with renewed endeavor, and at last, after struggles which test his endurance, cuts his dream out of the block of stone and writes his name " in tracings of eternal light."

There is no doubt that life is hard. This is true of us all; not of the poor alone, but of the most gifted as well. For reasons of His own God has made the way to heaven very rough. It is not a steady upward climb. We may be helped and cheered by those who love us, but the higher level is never reached without personal effort. There are moments when we are ready to give up, with the dread feeling that life is not worth living. Human nature has its moods, its discouragements, and at such times we are hopeless. Only God can sympathize with us, and He pities us, even as an earthly father pities his children, and only God has hope of our final achievement.

There is no human being who has not passed through this experience. It is the way the crude ore feels when it is being smelted or when it is placed under the trip-hammer and the very life is, with seeming cruelty, crushed out of it. But the

crude ore is purified by every stroke, though it knows it not, and when the hammer ceases to smite the metal is worth a thousand times more than when it slumbered on the mountain-side in its natural state.

So God's providence places us in hard straits, forces the tears to our eyes, furrows our brows with many a care, robs us of the presence of dear ones, and darkens the sky with clouds. You do what you would not, and what you hoped to do seems impossible. And yet, if you are broad enough and clear-sighted enough to see into the centre of things, these evils are all good; behind these tears you will find a smile, and beyond the vale of separation rises the sunny land of immortality which will reunite the broken ties and give you rest after honest toil.

The religion of the New Testament reveals the possibilities which can only be realized by just such experiences as those through which you are now passing. God expects that we shall be discouraged, that we shall sometimes be at cross-purposes with life, that we shall stumble and fall. But above all this lies the fact that Heaven beckons us, that out of every sorrow we can wring a higher hope, and that

the view from the mountain-top is worth more than the effort we make to reach it.

Give us the divine optimism which insists that all is well whether it seems so or not, give us the unfaltering faith that at eventide there shall be light, and then we shall find ourselves close to the Throne. With courage comes hope, and with hope comes success.

GOD AND THE SOUL

Like as a father pitieth his children.—Psalm ciii., 13.

IN the gallery of my memory there hangs a very simple picture which I never look at without peculiar satisfaction. The incident occurred many years ago, but it is as fresh in my mind as this morning's rosebud.

A father and a child were roaming through a wide country pasture. The little one prattled in the sunshine, now clinging to the father's hand in an ecstasy of confidence, and now flying as fast at its feet could carry it to a thicket where the wild flowers grew. When away from the immediate presence of the protector the child would turn every now and again to be sure that the father was there, as though for the moment it had forgotten that it was not alone, and then, with the delightful certainty of being carefully watched, would roam still farther, intent on some new object.

Suddenly danger appeared in the ominous bark of a dog. The child felt the instant need of guardianship, and with trembling haste rushed to the father's embrace, its cheeks blanched with fear, its eyes filled with tears. The strong arms, however, were no sooner round him than he grew calm again and the old smile returned. The consciousness of absolute safety destroyed the terror of the dog's bark, because father and child were heart to heart.

That is a very imperfect symbol of the true relation between God and the soul. Nothing will exactly typify that relation, but a strong and wise father and a little child dependent on him will serve our purpose.

A thorough appreciation of the fact that God is always close to us, is always interested in our welfare, is always within call when we stand in need of help, would be equivalent to a revolution in the life of the world. To-day it is a blind fact, or a fact to which we are blinded, and its practical value is therefore reduced to a minimum. We assent to the statement as a boy in school assents to a demonstration on the blackboard, but who does not assimilate the truth and after recess forgets all about it. If he

could once fix it in his brain it would last a lifetime and help him to solve many a hard problem.

Whether it is too large a fact for our present intelligence, or whether we are so absorbed in material things that we thrust it aside, I cannot say. But this I know, that if I could convince you that though you are but an atom in the great aggregate of humanity and your life is only a single thread in the vast fabric of progress, still the sun by day and the moon and stars by night shine for you as though you were the only being on earth and they were created to serve you in just that way ; that God is your personal God, filling your life with His presence, ready, willing, anxious to serve you as though heaven and earth were made for you alone, I would fill you with conscious dignity, and so enlarge your conception of your destiny that you would be transformed and transfigured.

That thought is central in the Bible. The Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount swing on it as on a pivot. That one thought constitutes true religion. For eighteen centuries it has been vibrating through the generations, and you and I have looked at it and not recognized it. It is, indeed, the whole

of religion, for he who has God in his heart owns the universe and must needs keep his face turned toward heaven.

To know that all the forces of the universe are on your side and will assist in your development is a heritage into the full possession of which we have not yet entered ; a truth so grand that he who receives it becomes ennobled; a truth so precious that when the shoulders bend beneath the burdens of life the soul still rejoices, for the power to bear is given by Him who is at your side, though invisible.

The religion which has that for its pivotal point is like the bugle-call which announces victory. Human and divine have met and become one. God and man are working for the same sublime purpose. The Christ has at last achieved His mission. What is to be borne will be borne in the sublime consciousness that even the hard passages of life lead to greater light. Some may weep, but wet eyes see beyond the clouds the outstretched hands of loved ones beckoning the weary soul to its rest. That thought is the beginning, mean, and end of all things, and man rises to a knowledge of his sonship to the Father.

God in the heart a welcome guest! Life a school from which to graduate, the lessons learned, into the Nearer Presence! Grasp this truth, guard it, and every day will become a stepping-stone to higher things.

HEAVEN

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.—1 Corinthians ii., 9.

FROM each successive elevation which we laboriously reach we get a wider horizon. In the valley where we made our start we could see but little, and that not quite distinctly, but as we climbed higher we not only got a wider view, but more light.

A strange thing happened to us. What we thought true when we were in the lowlands we found to be untrue when we climbed high enough to see more, and to see it more clearly. We discovered that on certain subjects our opinions were constantly changing. The truth did not change, and never will, but our opinion of what the truth is underwent a change with the accession of every group of new facts.

The earth, for example, was perfectly flat, and it was the centre of the universe. What science we possessed proved this conclusively, and he was made of queer stuff who could entertain a doubt on that subject. But the years passed, a wider knowledge broke in upon us, and we were compelled to surrender our old beliefs and take on new ones. The earth not only became round, but it swung away from the centre of the universe and became an insignificant orb in an obscure corner.

But in nothing have we made such advances or thrown aside so many cherished convictions as in the matter of religion. Especially is this true of our conception of the future life. It would be as impossible to accept the notions of our fathers on this subject as to wear the clothes of our childhood. We have a belief which is more rational than theirs and more in accordance with universal law. Their idea of Heaven was more like a fairy tale than a historic fact. They found but little comfort in it, for at death there was a break in the home circle which could not be mended until the far-away day of resurrection had come and gone. Between Heaven and earth there was no highway of communication, and

the future was a long and pitiful blank, without a ray of joyous or cheering sunshine. As one said to me who represented the old faith: "My child and I have parted. The relation of parent and daughter has been severed. As a redeemed angel she will not know me." I could not wonder that his heart was well-nigh broken, for she was his all, and he would have freely given his life for her. His tears came, his breast heaved with anguish, and, though he was as noble a Christian as ever breathed, he was without consolation and had to be content with that kind of resignation which closely resembles despair. Our fathers believed that, and their churchyards were the gloomiest spots on earth—acres not green with hopes, but arid and parched.

We have a larger view than that. We plant flowers on graves. Our faith is bright as the landscape at noonday, and if there is a shadow it is made by a passing cloud and does not linger. We have a new Scripture, or a Scripture with new light thrown upon it. Death is no longer a dread spectre, but a solemn event which ushers the unforgetting soul into the nearer presence of a Father who has prepared a home for us, and will bring us and our loved

ones together again. We have dispelled the gloom connected with thoughts of death. We say "Good-night" with a tear, but with the certainty of saying "Good-morning" with a smile.

In all our creed nothing has changed so much or blessed us with as much good cheer as our conception of Heaven. It is not the place of harps and songs, for the sturdy souls which pass life's boundary shall be sturdy still, the heroic shall find opportunity for heroism, and the work of God, done by his faithful servants, shall still go on as it went on here. We shall have life more abundantly—active, virile, noble life. Heaven is the consecrated toiler's home, and the unfinished task of to-day shall be taken up to-morrow. Death may call us before the hours of labor are over, but eternity will furnish us with hours enough to pursue our work until it is completed.

So it makes little difference whether we are here or there. We are ourselves wherever we are, our holy ambitions are not quenched, the flame of love is not extinguished, and memory still holds dear those who were dear on earth. So we put aside the childish things of the past and put on the garments

of a lofty and immortal manhood. Heaven will bring us and our loved ones together once more, and in that blessed life which gilds our declining years as the setting sun gilds the clouds of the West we shall gradually realize those things which the heart of man cannot conceive. Love God, and there is no danger either here or elsewhere. Be true, faithful, loyal, and you will hear welcoming voices when you stand on the border-land.

A HUMBLE LIFE

Whosoever shall give a cup of cold water.—St. Matthew x., 42.

MY friend and I were looking at a bit of exquisite tapestry. It was the product of a loom that had brains and a soul. Generations had gazed upon it with admiration, but I doubt if any one had done so with more reverence than my friend and I. He called my attention to the coloring of the central figure, to the dignity of its pose, as though it were half conscious that it represented the nobility of thought and deed which has always been the world's ideal.

Then, having assented to his criticism, I ventured to remark that three quarters of the threads in the picture constituted a background at which no one looked a second time. Still, each separate thread was necessary to the perfection of the whole. The

dull gray was as truly a component part of that whole as the brilliant colors in face or robe. What nobody ever saw was as important as what everybody looked at. The unnoticed thread on the farthest edge had its mission, and who shall judge its worth by its failure to excite admiration? I said to my heart that to be conspicuous is not the chief factor, and I thought to myself that perhaps the dullest thread in the entire fabric, were it endowed with consciousness, might be as happy with its humble task as its brother thread which was woven into the halo above the head. That bit of tapestry is a somewhat sad and pathetic symbol of humanity. There are some among us of whom it may be said that they have been decreed to be successful in worldly affairs without any special merit on their part, and our crime is that they excite jealousy and envy in us, which is not only discouraging, but gives us a feeling that injustice has been done. Their work has a blaze of light on it, and becomes historical. Our work, on the contrary, is done in a corner, and though we be honest and faithful, we live without observation, and die unknown and, therefore, unregretted. We are the threads in the

background, demoralized because we are not conspicuous.

But whether our task is great or little, it is the task that God has set us, and that fact should give us good cheer. What matter is it whether we are in the world's eye if what we do is done well and with a true heart? Is anything small in the judgment of the Almighty? Is a man of no account in heaven because he is of no account on the earth? Are riches, or fame, or great deeds, in peace or war, any foundation for happiness? If we do our best with what He has set us to do, need we worry because men do not look at us as we pass by? Is it applause or is it faithfulness that we seek?

"I am so little," moaned one the other day; "in the great aggregate I am so insignificant that I am quite invisible." That may be true, and yet one may build a great character out of honest though humble work as well as in the midst of great opportunities. It is not what you do, but how you do it, which decides your fate. Once get rid of desiring a high place, and be satisfied to do an honest day's work, the whole of it God's work, and you will make a little world for yourself, in which the spirit

of Christ and contentment will dwell. Instead of comparing your condition with that of others, and so disturbing your soul, if you would think it enough to have the approval of God and conscience, and to labor cheerily, making the best of what you have, you would find yourself stronger, healthier, and happier.

The Christ is our example in this as in all other things. He had no jealousy of the good fortune of others, but lived His own life amid the surroundings which God ordained. He found pleasure in the friendship of those who were loyal, and when sorrow came the companionship of the other world sustained Him. What this world could not supply He drew from the upper realms. He and the Father worked together, and a peace which passeth understanding was the consequence.

Be yourself, therefore. Measure your worth by the standard of duty well done, not by the opinion of others. What they think of you is a matter of small concern, but what your conscience thinks of you is important. Be strong enough and independent enough to care for nothing except the right and true. You will not then need to seek

for happiness, because it will come as sunshine comes to chase away the darkness. The smallest soul is great in the judgment of God; therefore keep that soul pure and manly, with Heaven always in sight.

TEMPTATION

For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.—St. James i., 13.

THERE are very few persons who have not been sorely tempted to do what neither reason nor conscience would approve. To resist is to add fibre to your character and to yield is to lose what it is very difficult to regain—your self-respect.

Temptation never comes out into the open and never argues fairly. It does not dare to tell the whole truth, but presents a subject in the light of false logic, gilds a bad argument until it looks like gold, and always leaves its victim to immeasurable regret.

A despotic conscience which does not know how to surrender is the safest guide we can have, for then one can look Heaven and earth in the face; but if for some promised good or pleasure we bid our con-

science vacate its throne, happiness and peace of mind take their departure. There is, therefore, nothing on the planet of so much worth as a clean conscience. If you have it for a bedfellow your sleep will not be disturbed.

I have watched the subtle processes of temptation in myself and others. It comes in the guise of good advice in order the more easily to accomplish your ruin. It sneers at your moral sense, assures you that we are here to enjoy ourselves in whatever way opportunity may offer, and declares that your scruples have no solid foundation. If you do not grasp the offered advantage some one else will, therefore do not hesitate. You are only too willing to listen, and while you do so your moral sense is being dulled. Reiteration of this false reasoning still further undermines your rectitude, and after a while you pretend to be convinced, but it is only a pretence. The deed is done and then you wake up to find that while you have gained something you have lost still more. You have gained a well-filled purse or you have indulged in some demoralizing pleasure, but you have lost a well-filled heart and learned what it is to hate yourself.

It is a somewhat cruel world, because false estimates of what constitutes happiness have thrown so many temptations in our way. There is an over-valuation of money and an under-valuation of moral principle. The race is so eager, so wild, so intoxicating that we forget everything except to get ahead of our competitors, and the means we take to accomplish this are justified, we think, by the fact of winning. As a consequence the tone of life is lowered and we measure a man by what he has, not by what he is. The bank account rather than the character excites our envy. Riches and the pursuit of riches are the bases of orderly society, provided riches and rectitude are interwoven; but riches without the rectitude are of no benefit to any one.

Men and women are too ready to pay a thoughtless, a reckless price for the goods they covet. Fame is worth something, and so is reputation, if it is honestly earned, but if you compromise your honor you are practically selling your soul.

What we need in this generation is a heroic dose of that old-fashioned corrective — moral principle. The only real man, the only man who is recognized in heaven, is the upright and the downright man.

It may be hard to persuade the public of this truth, but it is the truth nevertheless, and cannot be evaded or ignored. If a nation or an individual is to live comfortably it must live virtuously. False standards mean false and wretched lives, and the logic of events will make that fact known with terrific emphasis.

Honesty comes first, and after that anything you can get. When you give up the honesty, the purity of heart, in exchange for anything else you suddenly find that you have been cheated out of your best self. The object of life is not to acquire, not that solely, unless it be to acquire character. Your temptation to gash your conscience is based on a promise which will never be kept, or if the worldly goods are delivered you will be robbed of something worth a great deal more. Stiffen your conscience until it will not feel the force of temptation, and then you will be ready for life, for death, and for any other world to which you may go when your term on earth expires.

The only thing to set men right and keep them right is the Sermon on the Mount. It is the thought of others which consecrates the thought of self. A

staff and scrip with a clean heart will do more for human happiness than whatever else you may desire, and until we get back to that fact and to a full appreciation of it we shall fail in the great essentials.

THE MOTHERHOOD OF GOD

He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.—1 John iv., 16.

THE use of the word "motherhood" in this connection may strike you as somewhat odd at first, but on reflection you will see that it is peculiarly appropriate. The qualities of character which on are suggested by the word "mother" are those which we spacially depend in our relations with God and those which have specially opened our hearts to Him.

If we look upward through the word "father" our conception of God is not complete, for in the last analysis it is our home life which colors our religious aspirations, and however dear the father may be there is a certain range of attributes in the mind and heart of the mother which are absolutely necessary to a perfect spiritual education.

It is for that reason that God established the home as the nursery of every soul as it makes its entrance into this earthly life. The mother's influence is based on some elements which are not conspicuous in the father, and so what the father may not be able to do because he works along different lines the mother easily accomplishes because she is by nature more tender, more appealing, and more loving.

Under the watchful care of a wise father and a sympathetic mother the youth imbibes a dual life, on one side strong and manly, on the other pure, kindly, and womanly. No man, therefore, is perfect unless he combines in himself the rugged force of the father, his power to do brave battle with circumstance, and the gentleness, the kindliness, the sensitiveness which only a mother can impart.

One difficulty with the theology of the past is that it has been too masculine. God was regarded by former generations as an omnipotent autocrat. The argument ran that He not only could do as He pleased, but that He had a right to do as He pleased without reference to His creatures, and that idea embodied in the popular creed made religion cold,

rigid, and unattractive. A man's conception of omnipotence includes a kind of selfishness, the exercise of power with entire disregard of the happiness of those over whom the power is used. The dogmas which make us tremble as we read them had their origin in that conception, which, if the New Testament is true, is a curious and unwarranted misconception. The God of our fathers was a being to be afraid of, not one to whose arms you would fly for protection as a frightened child seeks its mother's embrace. There was an imperial authority in His voice which meant either implicit obedience or an appalling condemnation; not obedience through love of Him who gave the command, but through fear of consequences if the command was unheeded.

We have happily learned to read the Scriptures in a better way. We now know that the laws of nature are our friends, and if we break them there is no anger in their retributive justice, but only sorrow. More than that, they are pitiful and sympathetic, and the moment we see our error and try to amend it they will help us to recover our lost estate. In these very laws of nature there is not

only a sternness which will brook no wilful neglect, but also a motherliness which binds up our wounds, watches over us with tender solicitude, and with boundless love draws us away from the wrong, and leads us toward the right.

The whole universe is on the side of the repentant sinner. You cannot regret your downward course, cannot aspire to a better and higher life, but certain natural forces are thereby set in motion to lend you a helping hand, lift you out of the mire of remorse and set your feet on solid ground. In a word, the operation of natural law is motherly.

And so we have at last come to think of that side of God which is so tender and loving and forgiving and encouraging that it can be best expressed by the word mother. Omnipotence can be pitiful and full of sympathy as well as imperative. If you have neglected your opportunities, have yielded to temptation, have fallen to a low spiritual level, and are conscious of it and regret the fact and are determined to mend the past by a noble future, there is not a star in the firmament, not an angel among all the hosts in the other world, that will not shine on you, that will not walk by your side, that will not bless

your every endeavor. Christ will be as tender as He was to the poor Magdalen, God will stretch out His everlasting arms in your support, and every blade of grass, every flower, every cloud, every ray of sunshine will smile its encouragement.

That is what a mother would do, and therefore God is your mother as well as your father. With both a father's wisdom and a mother's love as your environment you must needs make your life worth living. That kind of religion which never despairs of the wrongdoer, though it frowns on the wrong done, will sometime redeem this lower world and equip us with those spiritual qualities which will make our entrance into heaven an unspeakable joy.

WHAT WE SHALL BE

The works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do.—St. John xiv., 12.

THE New Testament consists of a group of gigantic statements, and one of the most conspicuous on account of its stature is that contained in my text. It is thrilling, it is startling, and it is prophetic almost beyond credibility.

For myself, I believe that Jesus saw the future, the earthly future of the human race, when He uttered these words. Sometime the prophecy will be realized, and in that far-off to-morrow the representative man will be as unlike the average man of the present as the average man of the present is unlike the cave-dweller of a prehistoric period. Some will call this a dream, but I prefer to call it religion. I take it that Jesus was entirely serious on this occasion. Anything short of the profoundest sincerity

would have been equivalent to deception. He stated a literal fact based on certain spiritual conditions, and it was none the less a fact because it excited the wonder or the incredulity of those who listened, and none the less a fact because it excites our wonder and incredulity after sixty generations have tried to live the life He lived and failed. Give the race time enough and the processes of evolution or progress will vindicate themselves. We cannot tell what is to be by judging from what is, for there are elements in human nature which have never yet been awakened.

The Spirit of God pervades the universe, but we have not learned how to get into contact with it. When we discover that secret our lives will be so changed that for the first time in this world's history we shall feel that we are made in the image of God and are little lower than the angels. We are now in our spiritual swaddling clothes, with great souls beating in our bosoms, but souls undeveloped or dwarfed by their ignorance. We have longings that cannot be expressed, aspirations which resemble an eagle in a cage, ambition which tries to grasp at eternal truths and fails to get them. The best part

of us has never yet manifested itself, never had its opportunity, its proper impulse or environment. Since God made us we must some time be worthy of our Creator, but we are painfully conscious that this is not true to-day. We are on the threshold of our destiny and hesitate to take the next step. God is here, but we do not see Him. His influences are round about us, but the doors are closed and bolted and they cannot enter, for religion, or what we call our religion, is an intellectual and spiritual toy which satisfies us because we are in our babyhood. It is a mere shadow of the substance, an echo of far-off music, but not the religion which Christ had and which made Him omnipotent.

We have made great advances in physics, almost none in psychology. We have discovered that the universe of matter is saturated with vital energy, and in some instances have tapped the vast reservoir. Genius has sent a wire into the overhanging cloud and drawn from it a current, just as the farmer draws sap from his maple trees. The cloud has always been at our service, it has always held in its embrace what it would be glad to give us if we only knew how to ask for it. Again, there is incalculable

energy in this flood of sunshine which overwhelms this system with its light and beauty. Two great workingmen have gathered sun rays by means of reflectors and made them do an engine's work in driving machinery. Another man has liquefied the air we breathe, and such is its marvellous energy that it can be applied in a thousand ways to serve our comfort and convenience.

Now, these forces have been patiently waiting since creation's dawn for the hand that was skilful enough to catch and harness them. They are like a drove of wild horses roving the prairies of the universe. Some have been lassoed and tamed, but thousands of them are still running wild.

I believe there are as many psychological as there are physical forces. God is everywhere, and His Spirit is waiting to be captured by man. When we succeed in doing that we shall be transformed, our souls will be developed, diseases of the body will vanish, we shall live in health and peace and contentment to a ripe old age, and then step from the earthly home into heaven. When that blessed hour arrives we shall resemble the Christ, become one with Him as He is one with the Father, and realize

His prophecy that greater works than these shall we do.

If I dream when I declare this, then it is Christ who bids me dream. The words I utter are not mine but His. I simply believe what He says, and in my soul, which thrills at the prospect, and which has the utmost confidence that He was serious when He made this statement, I feel sure that He meant us to take it in the most literal sense.

But we can do nothing until we become receptive. Faith in Him, in His power and presence, is the one imposed condition of success. The world clutches us. We must free ourselves by thinking more clearly of spiritual concerns. This little bivouac of earthly life is as nothing. Eternity is all. Think of eternity, live in it, throw yourself open to its influences and you will soon find that you have entertained angels unawares. No more the shadow, but the substance; no more the echo, but the music; no more yourself alone, but you and God working in unison. Then we shall be the children of the Father, His face visible, His voice audible, and the cloud of witnesses always in sight.

POSSIBILITIES

And it doth not yet appear what we shall be.—1 John iii., 2.

IT is a very curious and somewhat startling fact that we have just begun to believe that we have souls. Heretofore we have entertained vague and fantastic notions on the subject, admitting in a general way that a soul is better than a body because it lasts longer, but having no clear ideas as to its development or as to its future. This life was so frightfully real that any other possible life assumed the shape of a dream. But of late the soul has claimed the attention of science, and, although progress has been made with slow and hesitating steps, we have certainly advanced far beyond our fathers in acquiring a definite position.

Psychology has forced its way to the front, or at least toward the front, and half the world is asking questions concerning to-day and to-morrow which the other half is trying to answer. There is no

reason why we should not make a great many discoveries in connection with that vital spark the withdrawal of which leaves the physical man so much a wreck that its presence is no longer welcome. We give it back with many tears and an equal number of hopes to our mother earth. We are all looking with eager eyes into the Beyond, and if any one in authority has anything to say on the subject we listen with rapt attention. There is something almost painful in the pathos with which we demand new facts about a continued existence, for our affections can not and will not be satisfied with the thought of extinction.

Almost every family has some legend or some memory of supernormal experience on the part of a dear one who was just crossing the threshold into the other life. In some cases the sight becomes phenomenally acute and the departed appear with outstretched hands to assist the newcomer in the passage to heaven. In others the ear is equally acute, and the overture of the angels is heard as a welcome to the brighter land. Death has thus been robbed of its terrors and made easy. These stories are floating in the air everywhere. Can it be that

they mean nothing? And if they mean something, then, how much?

Science has a duty to perform in this large field. It has either ignored or simply looked on with the curiosity of indifference. But it is possible to gather verified facts enough to formulate a theory which may some time solidify itself into a demonstrated faith. We cannot afford to "pass by on the other side," and the time is coming when skilful men will handle these things, some Darwin bold enough to follow the truth wherever it may lead, and tell us what we long to know. The hour is ripe, the attitude of the general mind is propitious, and we have a right to look for startling discoveries in the near future.

Or, again: When a man comes to me saying he has a message from the other world I may be incredulous, but I cannot forget that the word "impossible" has become obsolete. I cannot help hoping that what he says is true, neither can I help believing that it is well within the limits of possibility. That Christ enjoyed that privilege, that the Old Testament is filled with instances of the kind, that St. Paul records a most remarkable experience along

these lines, that in the life of every saint are similar occurrences, cannot for a moment be doubted. Have all these been mistaken, and have we been dreaming dreams when we put faith in these statements? Is the Bible to be trusted elsewhere and distrusted here? Is this universal longing to know about those who have gone through the churchyard to heaven a delusion and a snare, a bright promise of faith which simply "sets the children's teeth on edge"? A strange world, indeed, in which our thirst is never quenched, our hunger never satisfied! Why, then, the hunger and the thirst?

These matters are slowly coming within the range of scientific inquiry. The days of indifference have passed. With the future new glories will open to our surprised eyes, new truths will be discovered, and we shall find that the two worlds are so close together that as our prayers go forth to the gates the loved ones come to answer them and render assistance.

Before that time we ourselves may depart, but the way will be open to come back, bringing the love of God, of Christ, and of the risen ones into hearts and households.

BE PATIENT

In your patience possess ye your souls.—St. Luke xxi., 19.

PATIENCE! A very humble virtue and yet one which has much to do with our happiness and with the sweetness of our friendships. It is a virtue to be carefully cultivated, for without it we are a regret to ourselves and a sorrow to others.

Patience is of two sorts. First, it indicates the ability to preserve one's equilibrium under exasperating circumstances. It is, therefore, closely allied to self-control, for without self-control you cannot be patient. It enables you to preserve an unruffled temper in the midst of disturbing provocations and to look with a large degree of charity on the weaknesses or the petulance or the anger of those with whom you have relations. It is a quality of character without which no one can be satisfied with himself or receive the approval of those in

heaven who have a special interest in us. It smooths the pathway of life in an almost miraculous fashion and turns many an impending evil into a positive good.

Then there is another kind of patience. It refers to the manner in which you bear the ills of life, the spirit in which you endure hardship and struggle in any of its ten thousand shapes. When you suffer quietly—that is, with a placid and still trustful soul —patience develops and becomes fortitude. Patience requires a degree of courage, and fortitude, which means that you have a very heavy burden to bear, requires a still larger degree of courage. When patience under the petty ills of life evolves into fortitude under the greater ills the next and last achievement is resignation, which indicates your belief that these great afflictions are in the providence of God, and that you are submissive because He will help you to bear them and will bring out of them the most exalted spiritual condition that human nature can attain. Patience, fortitude, resignation! When you have attained to all three virtues and have based your conduct on them you know for the first time who the Christ was and why He was what

He was. There is a miraculous element in your life ; you are a Christian in the fullest sense of the word, and things will be revealed to your heart which the unaided intellect could never reach.

I have been on a full-rigged ship at sea. When the steady breeze played with her sails she raced over the smooth waters like a thing of beauty. Fortune favored her, and though I rejoiced at her speed I knew that her qualities were not being tested. When the seas were heavy and opposed her progress she bore the opposition with a patience which excited my admiration. She was in ill luck, but she did the best she could under the circumstances and seemed satisfied to make even a little headway. When the wind rose to a gale and the sails were furled, she showed her mettle. She bore the onset of tempest and billows with fortitude, with the persistent courage of a heroine, struggling, but driven backward all the while. And when again the raging storm was too much for endurance she accepted the situation, became resigned, as it were, and simply confined herself to keeping above water. Her bow was in the very teeth of the gale, and she rose and fell, almost helpless, but with an apparent faith that

tempests cannot last forever, that the sun would shine once more, that the calm was not far off, and that she would yet reach her destined port. In that experience I found the lesson of a lifetime. I may go even farther than that and say I found the central thought of the New Testament, the philosophy of Him who saw the Father's hand in the shadows of Gethsemane as in the festivities of the marriage feast.

So I declare that there is nothing more desirable than patience, a virtue so homely that most of us overlook it, but so necessary that a noble character cannot be built on any other foundation. What would our lives be without it? What else do we require so constantly? No day passes but we need to exercise it toward the events of life and toward our best friends.

To the poor man who thinks his future is hopeless, who feels that the world is against him and who is tempted to bitterness of soul thereby, I simply whisper the single word, Patience! If resistance is useless, then resist not, but let resignation take its place. Live your days one by one, borrow no trouble from the morrow, but find in the passing

hour what comfort you may, and let all other hours go their way. Impatience leads to feverish blood and unfits you for the hard work in hand. Impatience is close to folly, for it not only adds nothing to your power of endurance, but unfits you for your task.

To the sorrowing one who wonders if these tears will ever cease, who dreams of a better land where there will be no broken ties, and across whose threshold death never passes, but gives way to doubt through excess of grief, I cry out, Patience! Time will not only bring relief, but such sweet thoughts that you shall rejoice even over your loss, for what has gone from earth has entered heaven. One door has shut, but another door has opened. Will love know dissolution? Not if it be true love, for death has no power to touch or mar the memory or the affections. Each one takes his love with him when he goes, and it burns with a brighter flame on that farther shore; aye, it draws him back as one of our guardian angels.

Be quiet, therefore, placid of soul, whatever happens. Be so true to yourself that you will never lose control of yourself. Never allow impatience to

despoil you of your faith in God or your charity for your neighbors. Things may go wrong, but the stout heart which believes that this is God's world and that He has not left it to its fate will find some comfort, some happiness in every experience that comes.

The Christ had that calmness of character which indicates not indifference, but strength. The mightiest thing on earth is a quiet soul, which puts its trust in God, knows that it has the power to bear all that He may ordain, and so lives from year to year in the serenity of faith. To such a one it is but stepping across an imaginary line to go to heaven.

RESIGNATION

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. — St. Matthew vi., 10.

IT would be an act of folly to be resigned to a disagreeable condition of affairs if that condition were avoidable. A man is bound to get the fullest extent of happiness out of life, and it is a sacred duty to do so. He ought to do his utmost to make his environment as pleasant and as cheerful as possible. If he foresees an evil he should carefully plan to get it out of his way, and work hard to accomplish that object. There is no reason why we should not extract from passing time the very best and pleasantest it is capable of furnishing. It is as much an injunction of religion to do this as it is to be just and honest and charitable. The old notion that one can be religious only when he is half miserable, or that we should be gloomy in order to

please the Almighty, is now obsolete; it is a libel against Him who made the sky blue and scattered flowers over the earth.

The same rule holds good when a disagreeable condition is permanent and unavoidable; that is to say, it is a duty to take the brighter rather than the more sombre view of the situation and find as much peace and happiness as the circumstances contain. There is no life so narrow that it does not hold more of good than we at first think conceivable. If, instead of looking with covetous eye on the superior benefits which others enjoy, we set at work to live our own life in our own way we shall be surprised to find that flowers blossom in soil which we thought only productive of weeds. The great secret is to force ourselves into harmony with our surroundings —it is not always easy to do this—and compel them to yield their best product. This resignation is one of the loftiest of virtues and one of the most heroic.

I can imagine that a tree, when cut down, split asunder, steamed and bent into the shape of a vessel's ribs, may complain that it is hardly used; that it is unjust to tear it from its native forest and change its destiny and its purpose. But when the

vessel is afloat, breasting the storms of old ocean and bearing a rich argosy from port to port, I can also imagine a strange awakening on the part of that tree and a conscious thanksgiving that it was not left to flourish with other forest trees, but was singled out for special duty by a special decree of Providence.

In like manner, I have seen a human life crushed by a disappointment or by a bereavement or by some heart-sorrow worse than death. It seemed as though all the light had gone out of it—a black night and gloom. And yet, as time wore on the stars came out, and when the soul had become accustomed to the new environment there was a peace, a calm resignation which yielded no small degree of actual happiness. The narrow circle gave more than the larger circle of other days, and the burdened life had flowers in it which do not blossom in soil which is rich with excitement and pleasure. Many a man has learned what life means through affliction, and I sometimes think that our sorrows are the best part of us. The man who has his own way has a very poor way, and the man who is led by God is on the road to heaven.

Once feel God's hand on your shoulder and you will forget the world and make a world of your own. What others enjoy will be nothing to you, and what you will find in your own pathway when you are in the right relation to Him is sufficient for you. If we were to live here forever it would be different. Then we should feel hardly to be deprived of pleasures which others enjoy; but since this life is so short and the other life is so long what matters it that others have riches and we poverty, others leisure and we severe toil, or others health and we sickness? These things in the economy of the soul are mere details whose value we have greatly exaggerated. We can get on bravely and sturdily and live our little lives so worthily that when the perfect day comes we shall be warmly welcomed.

There are no circumstances in which we may not build character, and character is all there is to live for. Be patient, therefore, and the morning will break at last. Be cheerful, even in the twilight of illness greatly prolonged, and the shadows will disappear.

When the painful experience can be avoided, your efforts must not cease, but when the unavoidable

occurs fit yourself to it, let it be your mission to use it to your soul's advantage, and you will soon learn that no life is without peace and joy. Resignation is itself a source of comfort and happiness.

HOW MUCH ARE YOU WORTH?

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?—St. Matthew xvi., 26.

ONE custom which the business man strictly observes may well be imitated in our spiritual concerns. At certain seasons of the year he wants to know just where he is financially, what his profits have been in the past, and what his prospects are for the future. He can only do this by taking what is called "an account of stock."

If he has a good deal of cumbersome material on hand, occupying storage room which is needed for more attractive goods, he sets his wits to work to get rid of it. Whatever is outside of the popular demand, whatever is useless for future trade, however profitable it may have been in the past, he sacrifices without a murmur. His object is to keep only what will attract the eye of the public, and thereby add to his gains. In this way he finds out what he is worth in hard money, what he can and what he can not count on in his aim to expand his

business. We seldom do that spiritually. It is not often that we set up the standard of true manhood or womanhood, and face the fact that we have qualities of character and tendencies which we must banish from the soul if we are to achieve the highest success, and other qualities and tendencies which we must foster and cherish and stimulate. This review of the situation, "taking account of stock," getting rid of the worthless and adding to the worthy, if made with severe and impartial judgment, —in other words, if we could be persuaded to criticise ourselves as sternly as we criticise our neighbors,— would produce results which would make the world blossom like a rose and fill the air with the perfume of good deeds and noble thoughts.

Human nature is not bad; it is thoughtless. The majority of our impulses are good, but selfishness checks them, and the love of gain turns the current the other way. If it were a universal habit to retire to solitude for thirty minutes each day to seriously think of what it is best to do and why it is best to do it, to examine our motives as we examine a specimen under the microscope, we should change the whole complexion of life, and the acts to be

regretted would be greatly diminished in number. There is a deal of nobility in the soul which is kept under cover and given no chance to grow. The cares and rivalries and ambitions of the world are all on the seething surface, while down below, where the only real life is to be found, are half-smothered aspirations and longings. Lift from us this deadly weight of pure worldliness, give the soul an opportunity to work out its destiny with perfect freedom, and the millennium would come to us in the second generation.

This is what the Scriptures call the new birth. The voice of nineteen centuries ago still fills the air with its picture of the ideal. Measure yourself as you do your stock of goods; examine, explore your depths as you would prospect for gold in the mountain fastnesses of the West; think of what you may be, what you were intended to be, and compare that with what you actually are. Such an effort would change your whole outlook, for nine tenths of the evil you do is done from a quick impulse, not from a slow conviction.

Go into your closet and shut the door. In the dim twilight of that solitude regenerating influences

will come. This world will become more and more spectral and the other world more and more real. The voices of angels cannot be heard above this din and roar—even the voice of God is drowned by the whirlwind of business life; but in the loneliness of your closet, face to face with your soul, you will find a companionship so true and uplifting that it will be worth while to live, because to live means to widen your horizon until it includes heaven.

If you are young, occasional solitude will be a teacher insisting that what is upright and downright alone has stability. If you are in middle life, you will be taught of those wholesome regrets over mistaken deeds which make the blood purer and the heart warmer. If you are old, solitude will so strengthen your sight that the fairer country will loom up in the distance.

Find out what you are worth, take a careful inventory of yourself, and you will walk with a dignified tread, your lips will utter what is helpful, your hands will lift the weary, and you will wake in the morning to find that the only thing in the universe that should claim your effort is personal righteousness.

LOVE

I will love him and will manifest myself to him.—St. John xiv., 21.

CAN you conceive what this old earth would be if there were no love in it? Love is the river Jordan in which we are all baptized and consecrated to a new life. It flows by every home in the land, making green our lowland meadows, irrigating the desert places and covering the sandy soil with flowers. Life would otherwise be a dirge, but love makes it a pæan of praise. Take all but love and there is enough left to make us content and happy; give all but that and you may as well give nothing, for he who gives all but sunshine gives only frost and ice and cold.

Our confidence and trust in each other, our loyal friendship for each other, our charity of judgment toward each other, our willingness to sacrifice for

each other—all born of love—are the saving grace of the world. They are fragrance, they are music, and they are the bow in the sky predicting a heavenly morrow. Love points to God and insists on immortality. If one is pervaded by the spirit of love, not as kindled shavings, which burn intensely and suddenly go out, but like the altar flame of the Druids, which was never extinguished, he need not argue about immortality, for he has the right to demand it of the Almighty, for such a divine passion is not satisfied with this life, but seeks a higher development in a larger place, with larger opportunity.

Love is at once the prophecy and proof of eternal existence, and nothing else will satisfy the appetite which God Himself has implanted. He would hardly be a Heavenly Father who should so fashion us that we should find our supreme happiness and our highest education in love, and then at death suddenly blot it all out. If God's power were limited such a state of affairs would be conceivable, but with a God whose resources are boundless it is not conceivable—a symphony hardly begun before it is ended. That would be a curious exhibition of

wisdom and power. On the other hand, it would be a distinct act of cruelty. The song that is only partly sung when death bids us hush must be finished in some other clime; the task so nobly begun but left incomplete must be resumed elsewhere, or this is the strangest world ever heard of and the greatest enigma, a world in which death is more powerful than God.

Think of a planet without love. It is well-nigh impossible. Such a planet would not be worth living in. One would rather not be born than be born into such a world. Only your own advantage to be fought for and won! Greedy souls clamoring for more and refusing to share a morsel with their neighbors—a life-and-death struggle to get for yourself and to keep from others—a wretched world, too forlorn for words—no blue sky, no green fields, no rivulets making music, only a dreary, barren waste of sand, with but one highway, and that leading Nowhere. It is impossible to think of such a world until God has been dethroned.

Man's love is a very beautiful thing, but it lacks the special peculiarities of God's love. Man's love is weak, but God's is wise. God loves us so much

that He holds us to our ideals, and, though merciful, He will tolerate nothing less. He commands us to be all He knows we can be, and assists us with the whole trend and current of the universe. He will accept no imperfect gift. There is a sternness and a glory in God's love which we find it difficult to understand, it is so unlike our love.

When we love we condone offences, excuse faults, and so encourage both. The more we love, the more partial and the less critical we are. It is because our love is human, while His is divine. His love makes us nobler, develops and educates, while ours, pure and sweet as it is, is apt to have the contrary effect. There is no favoritism with Him, and when you have His approval you may be sure that you have the qualities of character which can lawfully claim it. His is the perfect love, while ours is imperfect.

But even our human love brings heaven close to earth. Our family relations—that of father, mother, husband, wife, child—are all separate benedictions. They clear the rugged path of experience with that sympathy which frightens temptation away and fills the fields with flowers and with a happiness which

can be had in no other way. Better still, it tearfully and joyfully points to that perfect day in which our broken ties shall bind themselves together once more, and in which the mansions of God shall be filled with loving hearts which will thenceforward know no parting.

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